LORD OF THE MYSTERIES

by Cuttlefish That Loves Diving

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LORD OF THE MYSTERIES

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- BOOK 3 -

-AUTHOR-
Cuttlefish That Loves Diving

[Atlas Studios (Webnovel)]

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CHAPTER 201
INQUIRY

Klein held his breath with his back against the wall as he faced the darkness of the corridor.

What's Captain doing? What's wrong with him? Was he drinking blood? Is this a sign of him losing control? Klein's mind was a mess, incapable of effective thought.

Nearly twenty seconds later, Klein clenched his teeth. With the help of the control he had over his body as a Clown, he silently made his way down the stairs.

Later, he then intentionally took heavier footsteps and made his way back to the door of Madam Sharon's bedroom.

Klein looked in to see the Captain wrapping Sealed Artifact 3-0271 with the black cloth. His expression was serious, his face clean.

It was as though what Klein had seen just now was only an illusion.

Glancing sideways, Klein saw nothing abnormal with Kenley's body. It was the same as it had been.

He inhaled and asked, "Captain, how am I going to confirm if those servants are still asleep? I can't make an accurate judgment just based on Spirit Vision alone. They'll have various emotional reactions due to their dreams which will be reflected in the color of their auras."

Dunn Smith fiddled with the Spirit Medium Mirror and was silent for a few seconds. He said with a raspy voice, "I'm sorry. I forgot about that. I've made too many mistakes tonight.

"There's no need for you to check, I'll confirm it."

He lifted his hand and pressed his glabella, then he closed his eyes, allowing formless ripples to spread towards the first floor.

It was crystal-clear to a Nightmare if anyone was asleep or not.

Klein froze when he saw this. He looked down and bit at the insides of his lips.

Captain, were you really drawing me away just now…

What are you doing? Do you know what you're doing…

He abruptly turned to look at the window, only to see the crimson moon hanging high in the sky, seemingly unchanged for thousands of years.

After collecting himself, Klein used the cover of picking up his tarot cards, revolver, half top hat, and other items to closely examine the corpses of Kenley and Madam Sharon.

They maintained the same look as when they died, but their skin was turning pale at a rapid rate. They also had tinges of blue and black marks.

It's a little weird, they seem to be missing something… It's not something specific, but more of a feeling… Klein muttered to himself. He felt his hair stand on end due to the chilly wind blowing through the shattered window.

At that moment, Dunn opened his eyes and said in a deep voice, "They're all still asleep, but some of them are close to waking up."

"That's good, that's good…" Klein looked at the Captain, not knowing what he was saying.

Dunn surveyed the surroundings and said, "Clean up the scene, then get someone from the nearest police station to come over. Oh, and make a trip back to Zouteland Street and get Frye to come help out."

Klein gave the Captain a deep look and nodded with his teeth clenched.

"Okay."

With Dunn's help, Klein quickly cleaned up the scene and left Madam Sharon's house through the front door.

Walking through the garden and coming outside, Klein couldn't help but look back. All he saw was the silent nursery in the darkness. There was no light at all.

He turned, his heart heavy. He soon located the nearest police station based on his memory—this was common knowledge to the Nighthawks.

*Knock. Knock. Knock. *Klein knocked on the steel door.

Sometime later, the officer on duty passed through the courtyard with a lantern in hand. He opened the door and observed Klein suspiciously.

"What's the matter?"

Klein failed to force any expression. With a heavy face, he produced his documents and showed it to the police officer.

"There's a serious murder case at 15 Osna Street. Immediately call for other officers to head there to help out!"

The police officer lifted his lantern and scrutinized the documents before putting his feet together and saluted.

"Yes, sir!"

Having settled this, Klein headed back to Zouteland Street on a rental carriage.

On the way back, he sat in the dark carriage. His thoughts were in a mess and unfocused.

Kenley is dead…

I remember that he was recently engaged… His parents are still alive…

What was the Captain doing just now…

Does he crave fresh blood…

Or does he have other motives…

His memory is still as poor as before, without any obvious improvement. Th-this means that he doesn't have the warning signs of losing control!

But he's known about the "acting method" for some time now. Does the fact that his memory hasn't improved mean that there's a problem…

No! It must be because the Captain is still figuring out the proper way to act as a Nightmare!

…Yes, the most important reasons why Kenley died was because of Sealed Artifact 3-0271. It was the Captain who gave it to him…

What am I thinking! It was a logical decision back then!

…It was also the Captain who suggested using Sealed Artifact 3-0271…

Calm down, calm down, I cannot make blind guesses. But I cannot wait around either, or the situation might worsen!

I'll send a letter to Madam Daly later and see if she knows what this situation means. Even if she doesn't know the exact answer, she'll definitely understand the signs of danger and inform the Holy Cathedral…

That way, we can smother the problem in the cradle and get the Captain back to normal!

No, the Captain might not have a problem. I might've misunderstood something. I'll see what Madam Daly says…

…

Klein had already made a decision when the carriage arrived at 36 Zouteland Street. He was no longer flustered and helpless as before.

He went up the stairway toward the entrance of the Blackthorn Security Company with heavy steps and opened the door from a key he fished out.

The familiar setting calmed him down considerably. It reminded him of how he felt when he asked the Captain for help every time something was wrong.

Taking a deep breath, Klein went to the recreation room and found Frye reading alone under the gas lamp.

Frye turned to look at Klein, his cold face revealing a look of concern and worry.

"Did something happen? Where's Captain and Kenley?"

Klein replied with a raspy voice, "Kenley's dead; he died at Madam Sharon's hands. We all made mistakes… The Captain is guarding the scene. He needs your help there."

Before they left, the Captain had informed Frye about the general situation. He told Frye that if they weren't back within two hours, he was to send a

telegraph to the Holy Cathedral. Similarly, since they had to apply for Sealed Artifact 3-0271 and enter Chanis Gate at night, Royale, who was guarding Chanis Gate was also notified of the mission. According to the internal guidelines of the Nighthawks, a Captain could permit the opening of Chanis Gate at night. If the Captain was present, then only the Captain could enter.

Frye froze for a moment, then he let out a sigh. He drew a crimson moon on his chest.

He put on his coat and hat and headed out the door. When he walked past Klein, he suddenly said softly, "You don't need to blame yourself. Making mistakes is something we can never avoid. We must always trust our partners."

"Yeah…" Klein closed his eyes, his vision turning blurry.

Klein and Frye first headed to the basement to notify Royale before locking the door to the Blackthorn Security Company and rushing to Madam Sharon's house.

It was nearing dawn by the time they got Kenley's corpse and Madam Sharon's half decapitated body back.

Dunn stood in front of the mortuary, silently looking inside. It was some time before he turned to Klein and said, "Go home first. You just experienced an intense battle, you must be exhausted."

"Alright." Klein didn't reject the suggestion.

He puckered his lips and stole a glance at the Captain before quietly leaving the Blackthorn Security Company. He took a carriage back to Daffodil Street.

Just as he had done the previous time, he easily entered his bedroom and locked the door.

Taking out the silver ritual dagger, Klein sealed the room with a wall of spirituality. He then sat at his desk and wrote urgently:

"Dear Madam Daly,

"I've noticed that there's something odd about the Captain recently. During a mission, he secretly…”

Klein stopped when he reached this point. His mind had gone blank. He didn't know how to continue or how to describe the incident.

Pa!

He threw the pen and crumpled the piece of paper in front of him into a ball. Looking at it, he pounded heavily on the table, sending a reverberating thump across the room. Klein closed his eyes and covered his face with his hands. He didn't move, as if he had become a statue.

Five minutes later, he sighed. He put down his right hand and burned the ball of paper with his spirituality. He watched it turn to ash as it fell into the bin.

After organizing his thoughts, Klein took out a fresh piece of paper and wrote:

"Dear Madam Daly,

"We just completed a mission and regrettably lost a partner. The exact details are as follows…

“…Back then, I felt that with my present standards, my Spirit Vision was incapable of accurately ascertaining whether the servants were asleep or not, and that it was very troublesome to do divinations for every one of them. Thus, I returned with the intention of asking for the Captain's advice. At that moment, through the mirror's reflection, I saw the Captain kneeling beside Kenley's corpse, with crimson blood covering his mouth.

"I'm not sure what exactly happened, nor do I know the state the Captain is in. I hope that you can give me an answer."

…

After writing this, Klein read the letter again with a heavy heart before folding it in half.

He then set up a ritual and activated his Spirit Vision to summon Daly's messenger. He summoned the strange face which was only a mouth without any eyes or nose.

He saw the red tongue laced with irregular sharp teeth and five pale fingers on the tip of the tongue. Klein silently handed the letter over.

When everything was restored back to normal again, he sat down and continued writing.

This time, he planned to ask Mr. Azik.

“…On a recent mission, something strange happened to my superior. He sent me away and kneeled beside the corpse of a teammate. His mouth was covered in crimson blood.

"Have you encountered something like this in your memories before? How can I help my superior?"

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CHAPTER 202
CONFIRMING THE SITUATION

After folding the letter, Klein took out the copper whistle, put it to his lips, and blew hard.

In the silence, illusory white bones came flying up from the desk like a fountain and finally formed a huge monster. It was almost four meters tall, still covered in a faint glow. Its head was still poking through the ceiling, looking no different from before.

Klein flicked his wrist and threw the letter. The white bone monster caught the letter and gripped it tight

Klein blew the copper whistle again and saw the messenger break into illusory white bones and fall like rain before vanishing through the surface of the desk.

Klein felt much calmer after finishing everything, but he didn't stop trying. He moved the chair back and stood up. He then walked four steps counterclockwise and entered the world above the gray fog.

The lofty palace and the ancient mottled table appeared before his eyes, as though it would stay the same for tens of thousand of years.

Klein sat at The Fool's seat of honor. Then, he took out the spirit pendulum from his left sleeve and conjured a yellowish-brown goatskin and a fountain pen in front of him.

He wanted to divine the Captain's situation that night!

After some thought, Klein wrote the first divination statement.

"Dunn Smith's abnormality would lead me into danger."

In mysticism, divination that involved any danger to the diviner was hardest to infer. It was an instinctual ability of spirituality.

In other words, as long as there wasn't an extremely strong disturbance, Klein would be able to get an accurate result from the divination about his own situation.

This was also the reason why he would divine if there was danger in the mission even though he knew that Madam Sharon had the ability to interfere with divination. He also knew that Madam Sharon wasn't strong enough to affect this kind of divination.

In order to determine Captain Dunn Smith's situation, he decided to eliminate all disturbances and perform the divination above the gray fog.

He held the pendulum with his left hand as he recited the divination statement seven times. He closed his eyes and entered a Cogitation state.

After a few seconds, he opened his eyes and they returned to their normal color.

He looked at the topaz pendant, and he felt heavy-hearted because the pendulum was spinning clockwise. The rotation wasn't small, nor was the speed slow.

It meant that the result was positive.

It meant that Dunn Smith's abnormality would lead him to danger!

And the danger level was significant!

After he closed his eyes, Klein "wiped" away the previous content and wrote down a new divination statement.

"The reason for Dunn Smith's abnormality."

He put away the topaz pendant and leaned back into the chair. He recited the divination statement as he entered a dream with the aid of Cogitation.

In the blurry illusory world, he couldn't see or discover anything. There was nothing except gray fog.

That means that there was insufficient information, so the divination failed… Klein looked at the goatskin on the long bronze table as he muttered bitterly and helplessly.

Suddenly, he felt a strong feeling of exhaustion. He realized that it was the result of an intense battle, continuous rituals, and multiple divinations.

Klein wrapped himself up with spirituality and stimulated a rapid descent from above the gray fog and returned to reality.

He had a few nightmares that night. The ending of each dream was either Kenley vomiting his organs, or Dunn Smith with crimson blood around his mouth.

…

The next morning, Klein was on duty at Chanis Gate so he arrived early at the Blackthorn Security Company.

At that very moment, Rozanne, Mrs. Orianna, and the other clerks had yet to arrive for work. Klein walked through the partition and saw the wide open door and Dunn Smith, who was seated in the Captain's office.

Dunn had taken off his coat, and he only had his white shirt and black vest on. He sat in his seat while he held a cup of coffee in his hands. He was

staring at the wall in front of him blankly.

His hair seemed dry, his gray eyes looked dull, and his face was showing obvious signs of weariness too.

Even for the Captain, who's experienced many similar incidents, it's still unbearable to lose two teammates in such a short period of time… Klein's heart winced as the scene of the shattered full-body mirror reflecting Dunn kneeling before Kenley's corpse with his face covered in crimson blood appeared once again.

Klein clenched his teeth and looked away.

After nearly twenty seconds, he composed himself and extended his hand to knock on the Captain's door.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

Dunn put down his coffee cup as his gray eyes became deep again.

He took a deep breath and said, "I've reported the matter to the Holy Cathedral, and they gave an initial reply.

"The Church will compensate Kenley's family with 3000 pounds, and the police department will give 1000 pounds as bereavement payment…"

*A total of 4000 pounds. To most middle-class citizens, that's wealth that can't be earned in a lifetime… Kenley's weekly salary was seven pounds, making an annual income of 364 pounds. Adding in any bonuses and additional income, he would make at least 380 pounds. Four thousand pounds is equivalent to ten years of his income… Such wealth can provide at least 200 pounds of income a year… Although money cannot make up for the loss of Kenley, it's the only effective thing at the moment… *Klein had many thoughts passing through his mind before he finally sighed.

"That's all we can do."

The Church of the Evernight Goddess couldn't be faulted when it came to such matters.

Dunn pulled his collar and said in a deep voice, "Go to the basement and take over Royale's shift."

"Alright." Klein nodded slightly.

He turned around and walked towards the door. Then, he heard Captain add as though he was talking to himself, "We'll send Kenley home later…"

*Send Kenley home… His father, his mother, his siblings, his fiancée, how will they react… *Klein's heart tightened, and he was somehow glad that he didn't have to face such sorrow.

He knew it was the mentality of an escapist, but he was really afraid of seeing the agony in the eyes of Kenley's parents, or how his fiancée would seem to lose her soul. He was afraid to see their expressions of hidden resentment and afraid of hearing their sobbing.

Klein quickened his pace and hurried to Chanis Gate. He completed the shift change with Royale in silence.

He sat in the duty room and occasionally took out his silver pocket watch and watched the time pass by slowly.

After an unknown period of time, Klein suddenly heard illusory sounds that overlapped one another.

He saw the four black dots appear on the back of his hand and understood that it was either Justice, The Hanged Man, or The Sun praying to him.

He had no way to answer them immediately. He could only wait till the notification ended, for more prayers to come, and until the next morning when he returned home.

Having just fished his keys to open the door to his house, Klein saw the maidservant Bella wiping the dining table while his sister, Melissa, who was dressed up, and his brother, Benson, came downstairs.

"Didn't you just go to Mass last week?" Klein asked curiously.

Benson smiled and said, "That sounds like the memory of a person who hasn't gotten any sleep the entire night."

"Huh?" Klein looked even more confused.

"Today is the first day that 'The Return of the Count' will be releasing tickets for sale," Melissa explained.

Klein smacked his forehead and took off his hat.

"I've been too busy recently. I totally forgot about it."

Especially these past three days… He added with a sigh.

Melissa looked at him with concern and said, "Your breakfast is in the kitchen. Eat it and get some sleep. Benson and I thought that since we're going out, we might as well drop by Saint Selena Cathedral to have Mass."

"Alright." Klein waved and bade his brother and sister farewell. He had a simple breakfast and returned to his bedroom.

After he did the preparatory work, he took four steps counterclockwise and entered the world above the gray fog. He saw that Justice and The Hanged Man's corresponding crimson stars were burgeoning and shrinking faintly.

He extended his right hand and emanated his spirituality. Then, blurry images formed before Klein's eyes. Miss Justice's prayer sounded in his ears.

…

"I pray for you to listen.

"Because of the Qilangos incident, my father hired a Beyonder to protect me. There are also others who are watching over me secretly. It wasn't easy for me to finally find an opportunity to pray to you. I would like to apply for leave from the Gathering next week. I believe this will pass soon."

Klein subconsciously glanced at the blurry image. The image was filled with fog, and there seemed to be a huge bathtub with rippling water. Miss Justice was wrapped in a bath towel.

He retracted his gaze and started listening to The Hanged Man's prayer.

His description was different from Justice's, but he was making the same request. He too needed to ask for leave due to the aftermath of Qilangos's death.

Klein nodded slightly and responded to their prayers respectively.

"I'm aware."

Then, he sent a message to The Sun's crimson star.

"The upcoming Gathering will be canceled temporarily."

…

City of Silver.

Derrick Berg was paying attention in the training field. The sky above his head was still dark, with occasional flashes of lightning that lit up the sky.

Suddenly, his vision went blurry before he saw the thick fog and the ancient palace that looked like the home of a giant. He also saw Mr. Fool, who sat in the depths of the gray fog.

"The upcoming Gathering will be canceled temporarily."

His voice reverberated, but the view before Derrick had already returned to normal.

He wasn't shocked at such a magical incident because Mr. Fool contacted him in this manner to remind him before every Gathering.

Derrick looked up at the woman in front of him subconsciously, a member of the City of Silver's six-member council, Shepherd Lloydia.

This terrifying expert kept switching between a smile and being aloof. She told every young man at the training field that they would join the patrolling troops soon and rid the dark monsters in the vicinity. That wouldn't be training anymore.

Elder Lloydia didn't notice anything strange… She seems to be getting weirder. Is it because there's a High-Sequence Beyonder's evil spirit among the souls that she grazes? Derrick thought.

…

Klein returned to his bedroom, threw himself into bed, and quickly fell asleep. He dreamed about what had happened these past few days.

Suddenly, he felt like he was being shaken by someone, and he suddenly woke up.

Klein opened eyes and saw a gigantic white bone hand.

The hand paused and threw the letter on the bed. Then, it vanished into thin air.

*Mr. Azik's reply… *Klein grabbed the letter, full of hope.

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CHAPTER 203
MUTANT

Klein opened the letter, feeling both expectant and nervous before he began reading Azik's reply.

“…I thought about a few possibilities regarding the scenario you described, and I remembered a few things about Vampires and Mutants.

"Natural vampires were already on the brink of extinction before the dragons and giants bowed out of the stage of world history. Later on, they might occasionally be discovered. The Vampires we usually talk about, as well as those mentioned in folklore, are more similar to Beyonders. I recall that the name of a potion in a particular pathway is called Vampire.

"If your superior is now in a half-insane state, then it's very likely that he mistakenly consumed such a potion. The result of mixing two potions from different pathways makes a half-insane state a certainty. Yes, I vaguely remember the pathway of the Evernight, which is also the Sleepless pathway as you know it, can be interchanged at High Sequences with the pathway of Death and the pathway of Giants. But it doesn't include the Vampire pathway.

"Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that your superior might have accepted it willingly. After all, Vampires have a long life, an exceptional constitution, and excellent looks. When compared with these benefits, accepting a state of half-insanity is reasonable."

Klein froze when he read the letter. He didn't expect Mr. Azik to provide him with this much information.

The Death pathway is also known as the Corpse Collector pathway. It can be interchanged at High Sequences with the Sleepless pathway. I knew about this from Emperor Roselle's diary. But to think that it can also be interchanged with the Giant pathway after Sequence 4… The Giant pathway is the one that the City of Silver possesses, which is also the present-day God of Combat pathway… I've always suspected that Giant King Aurmir was the ancient God of Combat…

Yes, Emperor Roselle's diary described the Church of the Evernight Goddess and the Church of the God of Combat as mortal enemies… Could this be because the pathways they possess can be interchanged at higher sequences?

If I follow this line of thought, I can find an explanation as to why the three ancient churches, the Church of the Lord of Storms, the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun, and the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, are at odds with each other. That's because the pathways of Sailor, Bard, and Reader can be interchanged at High Sequences!

Yes, during the end of the previous Epoch, the Pale Era, it 's likely that the fall of Death was caused by the Evernight Goddess and the God of Combat…

The Captain is perfectly fine usually, other than his poor memory. He doesn't show any signs of half-insanity. I can rule out the possibility of him consuming the Vampire potion!

Mr. Azik has recalled quite a number of things recently… Could the Creeping Hunger have really stimulated his memories?

Klein nodded and continued reading the letter.

"Mutant isn't the name of a particular species. It's more like the description for many similar creatures. Under normal circumstances, they're no different from an ordinary human, but there is an innate, suppressed, twisted desire in their hearts. This desire erupts when they come into contact with a

certain scene or object. They become monsters, succumbing to their desires for blood and massacre.

"After everything settles, they will return to normal again. They become slightly more merciless and unfeeling after each time their desires erupt, this will continue until their souls are completely twisted.

"The only example of this that I can recall is the werewolf. They're similar to humans for the most part, and they cannot be distinguished using most Beyonder abilities. But, during the full moon, the twisted desires in their hearts intensify, and their bodies also change accordingly.

"Your superior might be a potential Mutant. The death of your teammate might have triggered his true nature.

"These are all my personal guesses. I cannot guarantee that there are no other possibilities since I haven't gotten all my memories back. Perhaps your theory of this being a precursor to losing control can also explain this.

"There's no saving him whether he has consumed the Vampire potion, or if he's a Mutant. Of course, many people have theorized that Mutants were originally ordinary human beings, but were put under a strange curse or corrupted by some evil god or devil, and, thus, transform into a different monster under certain circumstances.

"Also, I'm not too sure if you can treat him when you notice the warning signs of losing control. I would advise that you report this directly to your superior's superior and hope that there's still time."

Klein looked gravely at the desk after placing the letter down. He slipped into deep thought.

He had to admit that the theory of a Mutant was a very possible one, but he couldn't eliminate the possibility that it was a warning sign to him losing control.

All I can do is wait for Madam Daly's reply… I sent the letter two nights ago, so she should've received the letter yesterday morning. If she replied immediately, I should've seen the letter last night or this morning… It's almost noon… Does that messenger not dare to go near Chanis Gate? Or was Madam Daly held up by something? Klein shook his head. He still felt exhausted and used Cogitation to force himself to sleep.

In the hazy world, Klein was suddenly jolted to his senses. He knew that he was dreaming.

He then saw Dunn Smith in his black windbreaker appear in front of him.

Responding in a manner congruent with a normal dream, Klein gave a delayed greeting, "Good morning… Captain…”

Dunn nodded slightly and said, "Leonard found a clue when he was investigating the Lanevus case. He needs your help. The Mystery Pryer that the Holy Cathedral sent over won't arrive until tomorrow morning because of a train fault."

"Alright…” Klein replied in a fleeting voice.

Dunn thought for a moment before adding, "There's no need for you to return to Zouteland Street. Head to 62 Howes Street directly. Leonard will be there waiting for you. It's been hard on you."

The moment he finished his sentence, Klein's dream shattered. Klein instinctively opened his eyes.

Howes Street… Isn't that the area where the Divination Club, my classmate Welch, and the member of the Aurora Order lived? There sure are many incidents lately, one after another, as if they're culminating in something… Klein thought as he got up slowly. He washed up in the bathroom before changing into a white shirt, brown vest, and black windbreaker. He then picked up his hat and went down to the living room.

It wasn't eleven yet, and Benson and Melissa hadn't returned home. Klein informed Bella that he was going out and that she didn't need to prepare lunch for him.

He then took a public carriage to Howes Street and saw the messy-haired Midnight Poet—Leonard Mitchell, whose hair exuded beauty, waiting for him in at building 62.

Leonard was still in a thin white shirt despite the chilly September weather. He had paired it with beige pants. He swept his green eyes at Klein.

"This might be the building rented by Lanevus under a false name."

"How did you figure it out?" Klein asked out of curiosity.

Leonard pointed to his head.

"Since you found a clue from Hood Eugen and suspected that Lanevus was likely connected to that member of the Aurora Order—the cloth merchant Sirius Arapis—I had to change my line of thinking after my normal investigations revealed nothing. I started investigating the Aurora Order.

"The previous report told me that Sirius had interactions with many of the residents on Howes Street, so I searched every one of them and found a problem with this one."

"What problem?" Klein asked.

Leonard raised his brows. "An obvious problem. The guest here appears very rarely. He claimed to be going to the Southern Continent to do business after Hanass Vincent's death and never returned. His records are very realistic, and the police didn't discover anything."

"This could only be a coincidence." Klein creased his brows.

"Of course, a coincidence. But when I showed the residents around here Lanevus's picture, an old man felt that he looked similar to the resident at number 62, other than his different glasses." Leonard took out a black-and-white photograph from his pocket.

Why didn't you say so earlier… Klein lampooned inwardly. He entered 62 Howes Street with Leonard, and at Leonard's request, he started to divine if there were any hidden compartments or secret chambers.

The result was yes!

"The secret chamber or hidden compartment in this building."

Klein wrote down another divination statement. He took a seat on the sofa and closed his eyes as he recited the statement.

Seven times later, he entered a dream. His vision was blurry.

In the blurry world, Klein saw a wooden bookshelf. He saw rows upon rows of books. He saw that one of the books had been taken away. He saw the wooden surface beside the book open, revealing a hidden compartment.

The scene quickly disappeared as Klein opened his eyes and told Leonard, "In the study."

Klein wound the topaz pendulum around his wrist and followed Leonard into the study. He saw the wooden bookshelf he had seen in his dream.

"Pull out that book, the place it's covering has a hidden compartment." Klein pointed at the book nearest to the sides.

"So it's here… I couldn't find anything when I searched the place, and I had no choice but to return to Zouteland Street to request for help," Leonard grumbled as he walked over. He pulled out the book Klein had pointed out.

After searching the area, he finally found the mechanism to open the hidden compartment.

A letter lay silently in the hidden compartment.

A letter? Lanevus hid a letter here? Klein found it extremely strange.

After he divined to see if there was anything dangerous within the letter and received a negative answer, Leonard picked up the letter and opened the unmarked envelope.

Leonard pulled out the letter within and unfolded it.

Klein leaned forward to get a look of its contents. All he saw were the first few paragraphs of the letter:

"Hahaha, congratulations. Congratulations on finally finding this letter!

"This means that you're not too stupid, nor too slow. You qualify to take part in this game of life and death that I've designed.

"Child laborers that die before their time. Factory workers who seldom live past ten years after entering the factory because of their working conditions. Female workers who risk severe illnesses for a meager salary. I see boundless resentment surrounding every factory, turning the surroundings oppressive and gloomy. This is the worst of times, and also the best of times. Our game shall take place under such a setting.

"Fools, prepare yourselves, I'm going to issue you a hint!"

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CHAPTER 204
VISITOR

Klein and Leonard lifted their gaze from the letter and exchanged glances. They muttered, "He's crazy, right?"

"Lanevus is secretly a lunatic?"

A lunatic who truly has a delusional disorder and an antisocial personality… Klein thought and felt a tug at his heartstrings. He quickly redirected his gaze to the letter.

"Ladies and gentlemen, the hint is that I've placed a bomb in Tingen, a bomb that will grow stronger over time.

"Seek it and finish it before it explodes. If you lose the game, there will be a boom, and the entire city of Tingen will be reduced to a ruin. Trust me, I'm not lying at all about this.

"—Lanevus, who enjoys giving his friends pleasant surprises."

"A bomb?" Klein looked at Leonard and muttered to himself, perplexed.

Leonard held the letter up to the sunlight and looked as he flipped it around. He didn't find any other clues.

"The term 'bomb' is probably an expression. I've never heard of a bomb that can grow stronger."

Klein creased his eyebrows and said thoughtfully, "No, I mean, he might be using 'bomb' to reference something in mysticism. Such as an evil ritual that

continuously accumulates power…”

Leonard cocked his head as though he was listening to something when suddenly, his facial expression grew solemn.

He nodded as his green eyes constricted. "Maybe you're right. Isn't there a description at the beginning of the letter? Child laborers that die before their time, factory workers who seldom live past ten years after entering the factory because of their working conditions, female workers who risk severe illnesses for a meager salary… Boundless resentment surrounding every factory… Perhaps, that might be the energy source that constantly strengthens Lanevus's bomb."

"Yes… that's very possible!" Klein suddenly tensed up and said, "We need to report to the Captain immediately!"

Leonard laughed and said, "There's no need to be so nervous. You should know that Lanevus is a Swindler. The part where he said that he didn't lie might be a lie itself.

"Of course, regardless, we have to return to Zouteland Street to report to the Captain. It's best if we can request the Holy Cathedral to send a mysticism expert over and find the location of the altar through the abnormal accumulation of resentment."

Someone is apparently very familiar with protocol… But why would the setup of such an altar need Hood Eugen's help? What role does a Psychiatrist play in this? Klein didn't object to the idea. He left 62 Howes Street with Leonard and rushed back to Zouteland Street on a hired carriage.

Just as they entered the Blackthorn Security Company's door, Klein saw two familiar faces, one voluptuous and one scrawny. They were Maynard's wife and sister.

They were still in black dresses and black hats. The fine checkered black gauze concealed their faces.

The two ladies were chatting with Rozanne, and when they suddenly saw Klein's return, they turned around and walked forward.

"You really are the cream of the crop in this industry." Mrs. Maynard nodded slightly and said in a low voice, "I'm very pleased with the outcome and am also impressed with your work approach. Here's the reward that you deserve."

The scrawny woman passed a light brown paper bag to Klein. It was filled with thick stacks of cash. There were ten pound notes, five pound notes, one pound notes, and also five soli and one soli.

"It's a total of 230 pounds," the scrawny lady stated simply.

Klein was in no mood to pay any attention to the money. He passed it to Rozanne and said, "Take this to Mrs. Orianna. I doubt the two respectable women would make a mistake counting the money."

At that moment, the corner of his eyes caught the Tingen City Honest Paper in Mrs. Maynard's hands. On the most eye-catching spot on the front page, there were two pieces of news.

Old baron's widow dies in involvement with MP Maynard's murder.

Mayor Dennis takes the blame for the worsening public security in Tingen for the past three months and resigns.

So that's the official excuse for Madam Sharon's case? I've yet to read the newspaper today… Klein nodded at the two ladies and followed Leonard through the partition to the Captain's office.

"How was it? Did you find any clues?" Dunn Smith closed his document, lifted his head, and looked at Klein and Leonard with his deep gray eyes.

"We found a letter that was left behind by Lanevus." Leonard didn't provide any further descriptions and simply passed the Captain the letter filled with madness and provocation.

Dunn opened the letter and scanned through it quickly. He rubbed his temples as he said, "He really is a lunatic."

"He's only a Sequence 8, Sequence 7 at most."

Klein agreed from the bottom of his heart. "Lanevus is a dangerous figure who can damage the stability of social order. Even though he's weak, we can't belittle him."

Then, he told Captain about his and Leonard's assumption.

Dunn touched his receding hairline as he said, "That was my thought as well. I'll immediately send a telegram to the Holy Cathedral and ask them to send a mysticism expert over for assistance.

"Who knows how dangerous Lanevus's bomb could be. We have to be extremely careful. When the Holy Cathedral replies to me, I'll arrange for the follow-up."

Klein and Leonard exchanged glances and nodded simultaneously as they said, "Alright."

Seizing the moment when Captain was sending a telegram to the Holy Cathedral, Klein returned to the reception hall to grab a copy of the Tingen City Honest Paper from Rozanne.

He stood at the partition and read the two articles with full concentration.

“…The widow of the old baron of the Khoy family, Madam Sharon, was suspected to be involved in the sudden death of Member of Parliament Maynard… The police received a tip and took action at night. They discovered that Madam Sharon and her accomplice had knocked out her

servants to carry out a pagan ceremony in her bedroom. They refused to surrender and attempted to resist arrest, resulting in the death of a heroic police officer.

"Finally, Madam Sharon and her accomplice paid the price for their evil deeds with their lives."

…

“…Mayor Dennis takes the blame for the worsening public security in Tingen and resigns. He also announced that he wouldn't be running for reelection next year. For the next few months, Deputy Mayor Mr. Harry will take on the responsibilities of mayor."

…

*A heroic police officer… Is that the description of Kenley? *Klein sighed and knew that it was the best way of handling the situation.

According to the internal rules of the Nighthawks, in order to prevent the forces of evil from taking revenge on their family members, their names would be kept confidential even if they sacrificed their lives.

He folded the newspaper quietly and returned it to the reception desk. Klein suddenly saw a visitor who walked through the entrance.

She was a young lady, in her twenties at most. She was in a ruffled hat and loose dress. She had lovely facial features, blonde hair, green eyes, and also a depressed yet silent temperament. She was quite a beauty.

The most eye-catching thing about her was her stomach that bulged out. She looked like she was more than seven months pregnant.

Klein was stunned, and he felt that he had seen the young pregnant lady before.

Suddenly, he heard Leonard say in surprise, "Miss Megose?"

Megose… Yes, the young lady who was conned by Lanevus! She's pregnant with Lanevus's child, and as such, there might be something wrong with her mental health. She says her child sings in her stomach and also whistles… Klein was suddenly enlightened and he wasn't surprised that Leonard knew Megose.

When they relaunched the investigations of people related to Lanevus, the lady's photo had been seen by every Nighthawk.

Klein knew her even earlier. Her aunt Christina, whose savings had been conned by Lanevus, had brought her to the Divination Club to ask for help. Her aunt even asked if the child in her stomach could be used for divination.

Then, as Megose heard Leonard's voice, she looked over at the both of them vacantly and replied politely, "Hello."

"Miss Megose, what brings you here to the Blackthorn Security Company? Do you have anything that you'd like us to do for you?" Klein took two steps forward and asked.

He was very confused by Megose's sudden visit. He felt it was an extreme coincidence.

We just found Lanevus's letter, and Megose comes visiting?

Megose touched her stomach and smiled faintly.

"Somehow or other, I suddenly thought of coming to Zouteland Street and suddenly thought of coming up to take a look."

Her mental health seems to have worsened… Klein recalled that he hadn't managed to activate his Spirit Vision and check on Megose's situation previously. Hence, he lifted his teeth and was about to tap his left molars.

Just then, a series of thoughts screamed through his head in increasing intensity.

"Don't look!

"Don't look! Don't look!

"You'll die!

"You'll die if you look!

"You'll die if you look!"

…

Klein stood rooted on the spot like a statue as his forehead was covered in cold sweat.

It was like having a deep and heavy nightmare that he nearly couldn't wake up from.

Suddenly, he understood something. He had failed to activate his Spirit Vision the last time because his spirituality had noticed an unimaginable danger. It slowed him down subconsciously, so he missed the opportunity and forgot the follow-up.

At that point, Klein had yet to digest the Seer potion entirely, and he had yet to advance to Sequence 8, so the warnings of spirituality were very subtle and difficult to notice. But now, Clown's spiritual foresight was so clear and obvious!

After nearly twenty seconds, Klein finally shook off his paralysis. He looked sideways at Leonard and realized that the Midnight Poet was also covered in cold sweat, and his eyes were filled with horror.

Suddenly, Klein understood what the bomb Lanevus was referring to!

It's the baby in Megose's stomach!

It's the baby that he left behind!

Klein suddenly associated the description in the letter with Hood Eugen's answers, and he suddenly remembered something that he read in Emperor Roselle's diary.

"I started the Industrial Revolution with my own hands and personally ushered in the Age of Steam and Machinery, but this will only become the hotbed for the descent of an Evil God upon this world?"

Klein's pupils constricted as he thought of a possibility that he instinctually refused to admit.

No! That's not right!

The baby in Megose's stomach can't be the son of some evil god or an evil god waiting to descend upon the world!

No! Why would Hood Eugen do such a silly thing! Although his Psychiatrist power can help Lanevus fool Megose and use her as a spawning vessel in her semi-unconscious state…

No! The resentment of child laborers that die before their time, and the factory workers and female workers who live less than ten years aren't helping the son of an evil god to grow rapidly!

No!

Y-you may not look directly at God…

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CHAPTER 205
URGENT ARRANGEMENT

Klein instinctively reached for his pockets. He held the Flaring Sun Charm in one hand and Azik's copper whistle in the other.

He acutely noticed that the cold, gentle Beyonder feedback of the latter had vanished as if it was being suppressed by an invisible power. However, the former was still warm and comforting.

Making use of this comforting feeling, Klein entered a half Cogitation state. He blocked out his feelings of worry and didn't leave anything to chance.

He turned and shot a look at Leonard Mitchell, then tipped his chin toward Megose.

He then controlled his expression with his Clown abilities and smiled at Megose.

"Do you want coffee, black tea, or nothing at all?"

Megose stroked her stomach as if she was listening to something.

"A cup of warm water. I suddenly thought of chatting with you guys about Lanevus. I have the feeling that you know a lot."

"Who told you that?" Leonard was no longer the frivolous guy that he usually was. His smile had turned rather stiff.

Megose suddenly giggled.

"My child told me. He knows a lot. He's very smart!"

Klein fought back the urge to curse. He turned to the partition and signaled to Leonard to keep Megose calm.

Leonard forced a smile and pointed toward the sofa.

"That's exactly what I'd like to talk about. We want to have a chat with you about Lanevus."

Behind the receptionist desk, Rozanne looked on in confusion. She suddenly realized that she didn't need to do anything.

Klein quickly made his way past the partition and directly pushed open the door to Dunn Smith's office, then closed the door with a bang.

He saw Dunn looking shocked before turning serious and saying in a heavy voice, "Captain, something serious has happened. I know what Lanevus meant by bomb!"

Dunn stood up and pointed outside.

"Megose?"

He had obviously heard Leonard's shocked exclamation, but he was unable to see the looks of fear and cold sweat on his teammates' faces.

Klein nodded and explained quickly, "I tried to activate my Spirit Vision to observe Megose to ascertain her mental condition, but my spirituality stopped me from making the attempt. It kept "warning" me not to look, that I would die if I did so!

"This made me recall a saying, 'You may not look directly at God.' Even if the fetus in Megose's stomach isn't an evil god attempting to descend upon this world, or the spawn of an evil god, it's definitely a legendary creature.

"Captain, connecting this to the black altar in Hood Eugen's memories, to his Psychiatrist abilities, to the tragic world as described in Lanevus's letter, I think that my guess is quite close to the truth: Lanevus obtained a ritualistic magic linked to the True Creator from an Aurora Order member. With Hood Eugen's help, he turned Megose into a vessel to gestate a certain power. Then, this power will make use of the resentment, oppression, and gloominess surrounding the factories to quickly grow until maturity. In other words, the ritual itself needs this resentment, oppression, and gloominess in order to succeed!"

Dunn considered Klein's words seriously for nearly twenty seconds before nodding with a solemn expression.

"I'll ask for assistance from the Holy Cathedral immediately. Let's hope that the baby in Megose's stomach can still wait!

"Of course, we can't just sit back and do nothing. Tell Leonard to keep Megose calm and keep her company. Notify Mrs. Orianna, Rozanne, and the rest. Get all the non-combatants to evacuate!

"I'll head to the back of Chanis Gate after I send the telegram. We have to prepare for the worst, which is if Megose's baby is born before the arrival of reinforcements from the Holy Cathedral.

"As Captain of the Tingen Nighthawks, I have the authority to use Saint Selena's ashes during emergencies!"

Saint Selena's ashes… The ashes of a High-Sequence Beyonder… The core seals within Chanis Gate… Klein's worries eased a little. He quickly thought of other things.

"Captain, we can also ask for reinforcements from the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind; they should have similar holy items!"

Klein suddenly had a stroke of inspiration as he muttered to himself, "Lanevus's case was originally under the purview of the Mandated

Punishers. Old Neil and I were there to help when one of their senior members lost control…”

As he spoke softly, his voice grew to a crescendo.

"Captain, can you ask the Mandated Punishers if the member who lost control was tracking or keeping Megose under surveillance?"

"Are you suspecting that he lost control because he got corrupted by the baby in Megose's stomach? They were responsible for Megose when the investigation was happening…” Dunn answered seriously. "We cannot delay any further. Go to Mrs. Orianna and the rest. I'll take this time to send a telegram to first ask for assistance from the Holy Cathedral, then I'll inform the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind. Yes, I'll also have to send a telegram to the police department and see if they can come up with an excuse to evacuate the citizens nearby."

"Alright." Klein had taken a few steps out of the room when he suddenly recalled something. He thought about the coincidence of Megose's sudden visit.

The image of the building with the red chimney appeared in his mind. He turned around quickly and said to Dunn, "Captain, one more thing. Do you remember the coincidences I told you about? The clue to the Antigonus family's notebook in the house opposite the kidnapping, Ray Bieber who didn't make it out of Tingen in time, Hanass Vincent exposing himself because of a coincidence, and how a member of the Aurora Order lost his life because he chanced upon me, etc.

"All these coincidences are very subtle and hard to detect, but the fact that Megose suddenly came looking for us right after we discovered Lanevus's letter is too obvious and direct. This coincidence was already laid bare before us, it's no longer hidden! I think that the person behind this will soon take center stage!

"Also, why would Madam Sharon take the risk in killing Member of Parliament Maynard? Is this also a coincidence?"

Dunn thought about it and gave a solemn reply, "I'll include this point in the telegram."

Klein didn't waste any more time. He exited the office and went straight for the accountant's room on the opposite side.

Mrs. Orianna was preparing the budget for the last three months of the year. She wanted to complete it in advance just in case the Captain forgot about it again. When she saw Klein enter, she greeted him with a smile.

"Lad, what claims do you have to submit today?"

Klein exhaled.

"Mrs. Orianna, we will be on vacation today. Go back home immediately."

Orianna froze for a while, looking at the serious face before her in a daze.

A few seconds later, she stood up in a fluster.

"Alright."

Klein added in a hurry, "Help me inform the rest of the clerks in the office and the armory. I'll inform Rozanne."

"Yes!" Orianna didn't even pack. She grabbed her handbag and hurried out of the accounting office.

She turned and stared at Klein after entering the corridor. She drew a crimson moon near her chest and said, "All of you will be blessed by the Goddess!"

Thank you… Klein replied in silence. He made his way past the partition into the receptionist area only to see Leonard chatting with Megose about Lanevus, his expression rigid.

Klein leaned toward Rozanne as he filled up a cup of warm water. He then whispered, "Go home, it's dangerous here. Come back tomorrow."

Rozanne opened her mouth in shock but closed it again after seeing Klein's stern expression.

She lowered her head and packed for about ten seconds before picking up her bag and leaving the receptionist area.

Just as she was walking past Klein, she bit on her lip and whispered, "To be honest, I respect the Nighthawks as much as I hate other people who become Beyonders…”

…

After seeing the clerks evacuate the Blackthorn Security Company, Klein brought warm water to Megose, bent his back, and placed it on the table in front of her.

"I have something to settle, I'll be back soon."

As he stood up, he took the opportunity to lean in towards Leonard's ear and whispered, "Keep her here."

Leonard clenched his teeth and widened his mouth into a grin. He continued his conversation with Megose and noticed that Megose was getting a little restless, as though she was losing her focus.

Klein returned to the Captain's office, only to realize that Dunn had already gone underground. There was a telegram on the table. It was the reply from the Mandated Punishers.

"Yes. We will be there immediately."

Yes… The Mandated Punisher did lose control because of Megose… Klein couldn't calm himself down as he made his way to the corridor. He didn't know if he was waiting for the Captain to retrieve the holy ashes or for reinforcements to arrive.

I wonder if High-Sequence Beyonders can teleport… I don't think so… He paced around a few times, suddenly feeling peaceful. He saw that the gas lamps on both sides of the corridor were now dyed a faint blue.

Amid the darkness, Dunn followed the stairs into the corridor. In his palm was a square, palm-sized box of ashes.

This box looked as though it was made out of pure silver, but it also felt like it was human bones. It was carved with many mysterious patterns. Klein felt colder the closer he was to the box, it was as if the cold was rapidly seeping into his blood.

Dunn's face was bathed in an icy blue light. He told Klein, "Go to Chanis Gate and pick out a Sealed Artifact with the highest offensive ability. Decide exactly which one with your own judgment. I've already told Seeka and the Keepers inside. Take note of the hidden threats. Of those, there are three Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts, which are…"

"Oh, now that I've taken out the ashes of Saint Selena, Seeka and the Keepers cannot leave their positions now."

At this point, Frye and Royale were both at Kenley's house for the funeral preparations. The Archbishop at Saint Selena Cathedral had gone to the countryside to preach.

"Alright." Klein didn't hesitate, immediately turning towards the basement.

When he was nearing the intersection, Klein suddenly stopped. He knew that most of the Sealed Artifacts behind Chanis Gate at Tingen City were

Grade 3 and wouldn't have much of an effect on the baby in Megose's stomach. It was, at the very least, a legendary creature.

The Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem might work, but it takes too long to have an effect. It's unsuitable for this… There are only three Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts in Tingen City, and they're all very dangerous artifacts that can easily result in my death… I estimate their powers to be about the same as my Flaring Sun Charm, so I cannot have too many reservations later. I'll use the Flaring Sun Charm without any hesitation! It would definitely be as powerful as a Grade 2 Sealed Artifact; after all, it has the power of divine blood in it… Klein's mind whirled as he nodded indiscernibly.

He felt for the Flaring Sun Charm and Azik's copper whistle in his pocket, but he was surprised to find that the sensation of the latter was back.

Regardless of whether it was useful or not, Klein took out a pen and paper set that was used for divination and wrote a short message.

"The person who made my fate disharmonious and stole the skull of your child has appeared. He has arranged for Megose to enter the Blackthorn Security Company at 36 Zouteland Street. It's highly likely that Megose is harboring the son of an evil god.

"The situation is very urgent."

He put away his pen and folded the piece of paper. Klein took out the copper whistle at the intersection and blew, then watched the giant skeleton messenger appear before him.

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CHAPTER 206
GRADE 2 SEALED ARTIFACTS

In the corridor within the deep and serene basement, the nearly four-meter-tall bone messenger disappeared before Klein's eyes after taking the letter.

When all that was left of the surroundings were the classic gas lamps embedded in the walls, he put away Azik's copper whistle and walked towards Chanis Gate.

As he was writing the letter, he had already decided on which Sealed Artifact to pick.

Firstly, it would be almost impossible for the Grade 3 three Sealed Artifacts to have any effect on the baby in Megose's stomach. Unless it was an item like the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem which had hidden powers.

But, at that very moment, in such a situation, Klein wasn't in the mood to explore or research a secret that might or might not exist. Plus, most Sealed Artifacts would carry a certain level of danger for the user. So, Klein eliminated the Grade 3 Sealed Artifacts that would weaken the user without affecting the enemy.

Secondly, the Tingen Nighthawks didn't have any Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts and only three Grade 2 artifacts. That was originally a secret that Klein wasn't allowed to know, but due to the urgency of the situation, Dunn made use of an emergency clause and told him the general situation.

Dunn Smith couldn't hold any other Sealed Artifacts at the same time while holding Saint Selena's ashes.

And behind the Tingen City's Chanis Gate, there were three Grade 2 Sealed Artifacts: 2-030, 2-078, and 2-105.

The name of 2- 030 was "Inexhaustible Poison." It originated from a Beyonder with an unknown Sequence name who suddenly went mad and cut his wrist to commit suicide. He let his blood flow into an ordinary silver cup. But when his blood ran dry, the silver cup wasn't filled, and the liquid in the cup became crystal-clear and alluring. It was a temptation that even a Sequence 5 Beyonder had failed to resist. After he drank the liquid, he died of poisoning on the spot.

After the person died, the poison seeped out through his pores and pooled together again. Its volume was the same as before he drank it. Not one bit less.

Dunn said that the researchers in the Holy Cathedral suspected that the poison could kill a High-Sequence Beyonder. However, the question lay within the fact that it was almost impossible for a High-Sequence Beyonder to be tempted to drink it. Furthermore, the traits of 2-030 were obvious, so no one would consume it by accident. If one wanted to poison them, they had to first capture them, seize control of them, and then force it down their throat. But then, why go through the trouble?

2-030 would constantly tempt the living things around it to drink it. The user had to be fully focused on resisting its power. Any slight negligence would make one drink the poison as though it was only natural to do so.

When Dunn finished his description, Klein decided, almost instantly, to not pick that Sealed Artifact.

The name of 2-078 was "Door of Death." Its appearance was like a normal wooden door. Any living thing that passed through it would die instantly. No High-Sequence Beyonder had ever participated in the test.

It possessed living traits and constantly attempted to escape. It could change its appearance and disguise itself into pre-existing doors. If the user made

any mistakes, he would lose control of it. Then, he would need to be careful and not pass through any door near him. He would have to try to wait at the original spot for help or break through a wall to escape.

Klein thought of using 2-078, but after reevaluating the latter two, he felt that the intuition of a legendary creature would be very sharp and would be able to differentiate whichever door was the Door of Death.

In the end, he decided to pick 2-105.

The name of the Sealed Artifact was "Blood Vessel Thief." It looked like a thick, stiffened blood vessel. Anyone who touched it, regardless of whether they were protected or not, would have their life stolen. In the beginning, it wouldn't be obvious. But, if one didn't break contact with it, the effects would be visible half an hour later. Dunn said that a Sequence 5 heretic held onto it for two hours. He turned from a brawny man in his thirties into a hunched old man who had loose skin, thin white hair, and missing teeth.

The most important trait of 2-105 was that the person wearing it would have the chance to steal an ability from a target within a specific range. Even High-Sequence Beyonders could be robbed of their abilities, but the probability was smaller.

Within a ten-minute time period, the person who was robbed would lose the corresponding ability while the person who wore the item would be able to use the ability skillfully. Ten minutes later, the ability would vanish, and the person who was robbed would need to wait a couple of days to recover.

Regardless of whether it works or not, it will at least raise the probability of success from five percent to ten percent. I'm the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck, after all… Besides, our main goal is just to take precautions and make preparations to deal with the worst case scenario. We won't necessarily have to take action… Hopefully, reinforcements will arrive soon… Klein stopped outside the duty room, showing no signs of hesitation anymore.

About the negative effects of Sealed Artifact 2-105, he wasn't worried because he wasn't planning to use the artifact himself…

His plan was to give it to Leonard, as he already had the Flaring Sun Charm and Azik's copper whistle who he had no idea if it would still be suppressed.

My dear Poet, it's time for you to show your true secret… Klein muttered and saw Seeka Tron standing by the duty room.

With her white hair and black eyes, the part-time author remained silent for a few seconds before saying, "Why don't you guard Chanis Gate? I'm stronger and more experienced than you."

But you don't have Flaring Sun Charms… Klein replied with a smile, "Madam, I'm already a Sequence 8.

"It wouldn't be safe here either. There are many Sealed Artifacts that possess living traits that are itching to take action. Well, if we fail, the people here will definitely not survive.

"Heh heh, our goal upstairs is to buy time and wait for reinforcements. It might be safer than being around Chanis Gate."

Seeka Tron puckered her lips slowly and drew a crimson moon on her chest.

"May the Goddess bless all of you."

As Dunn didn't have the time to write the document in time, Klein couldn't enter Chanis Gate directly. All he did was watch Seeka Tron push open a tiny crack and enter.

After a few minutes, she appeared by the door, and she was holding a thick, blood-tainted, pale blood vessel in her left hand.

Klein extended his hand to take it, and he immediately felt a faint current surging in his body.

…

In the reception hall of the Blackthorn Security Company.

Leonard had already shaken off his stiff state from earlier, and his expression didn't look abnormal as he talked about the recently discovered house that Lanevus rented before.

"Is that so? He never told me about it before…” Megose replied normally, creasing her eyebrows slightly.

Then, she grabbed her blonde hair, pulled out a handful, and casually threw it into the trashcan by the side.

Leonard was dumbfounded. He gulped with difficulty, and his palms were full of cold sweat once again.

…

Klein walked up the stairs to the second floor with the Blood Vessel Thief in his left hand.

He looked at the door that led to the Nighthawks break room, where Dunn Smith stood silently in his black windbreaker. His eyes were gray and deep, just like when they had first met.

"Reintroducing myself, Nighthawk, Dunn Smith."

The voice of the past sounded in Klein's ears as the scene of Dunn by Kenley's corpse flashed in his head. There was blood all over his mouth.

He suddenly fell silent and walked over. He lifted his left hand and said, "Captain, I picked Sealed Artifact 2-105. I plan on letting Leonard use it."

Dunn nodded slightly. He didn't ask why but turned and pointed at his office as he spoke.

"The Holy Cathedral sent a telegram. They said that they'll gather a team of strong Beyonders immediately and asked us to stall for as much time as possible and try to wait.

"About those coincidences, they didn't give any reply. I think they don't have any conclusions as of yet. Or perhaps, the person who handles the telegrams doesn't know the actual situation and has no way to make guesses. You know, we have to make the best use of time. Telegrams can't be too long."

"Yes." Klein nodded. He got closer to the partition and looked outside as he said, "How's the situation?"

"Nothing strange as of yet." Dunn looked down at the Saint's ash box in his left hand.

Seeing how Leonard and Megose were having a good time chatting, Klein didn't interrupt them. He retreated to the Nighthawks' recreation room and faced Dunn with the corridor in between them.

Just then, Dunn suddenly let out a self-deprecating laugh.

"I forgot something."

"What is it?" Klein replied, puzzled.

Dunn looked sideways at him and said, "Daly told me to explain myself to you."

"Huh?" Klein was stunned, as he couldn't quite understand what the Captain meant.

After two seconds, before Dunn could reply, he suddenly understood.

Madam Daly didn't reply immediately because she thought it was unnecessary. She had forwarded the matter to the Captain and let him explain himself.

**Th-that means that there isn't anything serious with the Captain! **

At this critical point, Klein suddenly felt a surge of joy erupt inside of him.

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CHAPTER 207
GUARDIAN

Dunn sighed.

"I did want to send you away back then since I was going to do something that involves the secrets of the Church and the Nighthawks. But Kenley's death left my mind in chaos. At that moment, all I could think of was a clumsy excuse, thus, giving you the opportunity to witness what I was doing."

"What secret is that?" Klein pressed, now being more at ease.

He had almost forgotten about the threat of the evil god's son, or the existence of a legendary creature outside.

Dunn weighed his words and said, "There might be a law in mysticism. Heh, even though I haven't read many books, I'm still aware of what a law means.

"This law is called 'Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility.'

"The characteristics of a Beyonder is never destroyed or reduced. It's only passed from one carrier to the next."

Klein's eyes opened wide. He suddenly came to a realization and asked thoughtfully, "For example, the Sealed Artifacts, mysterious objects, or a potion's main ingredients that are left behind by Beyonders who have lost control?"

"Correct." Dunn nodded solemnly. "This isn't only the case for Beyonders who lose control; it's also the same for normal Beyonders after they die."

"The same…" Klein mulled over Dunn's description, now having a faint idea of what the Captain was doing.

He suddenly recalled when the suited clown died. He recalled the blue, thumb-sized blood sphere that was suspended beside the corpse of the suited clown. Frye's explanation had been that there would always be strange transformations after a Beyonder died.

Dunn continued with his deep gray eyes, "But what's different about Beyonders who lose control is that a Beyonder who dies normally won't leave behind ingredients or objects. Th-they're equivalent to a potion, a potion that corresponds to their Sequences, except that they're lacking a certain amount of supplementary ingredients."

*Equivalent to potions… Equivalent to potions! *Klein squinted as a flash of inspiration went through his mind. The endless darkness in his mind was illuminated in that instant.

He suddenly understood many things, figuring out why the Beyonder pathways wouldn't be broken, even if the creatures used as main ingredients were going extinct.

Apart from using substitutes, one could also simply use the remains of Beyonders!

That should also be the reason why they only handed out complete potions at the higher Sequences! Another reason is to prevent the formula from being revealed to people adept at divination or mediumship rituals… Many guesses went through Klein's mind.

Dunn looked at the recreation room and explained in a deep voice, "A few years ago… Well… I can't exactly remember just exactly how many years it was, but I wasn't the Captain of the Nighthawks back then. I unexpectedly

realized this problem, and after interacting with Daly, who had just become a Beyonder, I immediately sent a report to the Holy Cathedral. The Holy Cathedral told me to keep it a secret and gave me two choices. Heh heh, that's also the reason why it's me, and not Daly, who's explaining this to you. Whoever exposes this is responsible for it.

"The first choice was to pretend to know nothing, just like a large number of Nighthawk Captains and Deacons, and allow the Holy Cathedral to continue dealing with the remains of Beyonders who died through normal means. The second was for them to give me a unique, simple ritual and the corresponding techniques. It would allow me to temporarily consume the items produced by the unique characteristics within a limited period of time. Well, this is only suitable for Sequences of the same pathway at my level or lower.

"This would augment my Beyonder characteristics, and I would also become more powerful. In terms of abilities regarding dreams, my powers now are not too different from a Sequence 6's. That's also the reason why I dared to deal with Madam Sharon."

"So that's why… To think that something like this exists…" Klein slowly exhaled.

He finally understood why he couldn't come up with a logical explanation despite his best efforts. That was because he didn't have all the relevant information and was unable to fill in the blanks.

Yes, this does match the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility… Would consuming these characteristics cause a qualitative change in the Captain by constantly accumulating them? Klein allowed his mind to wander.

After glancing at him, Dunn let out a bitter smile.

"I chose the second option, but not because I wanted to become more powerful. If I wanted to become more powerful, quickly digesting a potion

and receiving an advancement is the best and most direct way."

"Yes," Klein agreed sincerely. "Consolidating the characteristics of the potions of the same Sequence will increase the risk of losing control at the same time as it improves your abilities, right?"

Dunn shook his head solemnly. "No, these are the remains of normal Beyonders and not Beyonders who have lost control. Well, after I came to know of the acting method, I realized that it would increase the difficulty of digesting the potion."

"Then why do you still continue?" Klein asked in shock.

Dunn placed his hand into his pocket, intending to take out his pipe, only to find that he had left it in his office.

He shook his head and let out a self-deprecating smile.

"I just said that becoming more powerful isn't the reason why I consume their remains."

Having said that, he paused, his eyes wandering to the blue flicker of the gas lamp opposite where he was standing.

"They were all my partners… We've gone through many things together. We've dealt with monsters in the darkness and insane heretics together. Some of them have saved me, and I've saved quite a number of them. We walked together in the silent night. We fought together in battles that aren't visible to the general public. We faced danger together. We had each other's backs.

"I really can't bear to part with them. I remember the lad, Hitte. He broke into tears the first time we went on a dangerous mission. I remember Adelaide, heh—he was Rozanne's father. He once blocked an evil curse for me with his arm. I remember the lady, Dwayne, and her warm temperament which was like the dawn. She would always silently record the things we

encountered. I remember Kenley being someone who knew how to do many things like play the seven-string guitar, sing, tell stories, even though he wasn't tall. He was more like a poet than Leonard… I miss them very much.

"I hoped to continue fighting with them, to continue dealing with the monsters in the darkness, to deal with the crazy heretics, to protect Tingen City with them. Thus, I chose to consume their remains."

Dunn's gray eyes seemed to flicker. His reliable and dependable persona broke down considerably at that moment.

His lips arched upward slightly as he continued, "They're still with me in my dreams. Adelaide loves to read, and he often reads at the solarium. He often tells me to discipline Rozanne and get her to mature faster, to the point that Rozanne complains about me becoming more and more like her father and has become scared of me. Hitte is a person who cannot sit still and has to hunt in the forest every day. Dwayne always stands by the window of her bedroom and watches us chat. Kenley, who recently joined, created his own seven-string guitar and sings while strumming it… I really miss them."

"Captain…" Klein subconsciously muttered. His eyes became blurred and watery. He couldn't help but rub his eyes and curse in his heart. *Fuck. Captain, you're making me cry…*

But I finally understand the reason for the Captain's slow progress despite using the "acting method"…Klein let out a silent sigh.

"Unfortunately, Old Neil died after losing control. Otherwise, he would've brought along much joy to us." Dunn retracted his gaze. He lowered his head and massaged the bridge of his nose.

A few seconds later, he lifted his head and let out a bitter smile.

"This is a selfish decision.

"I don't know what the true wishes of Adelaide, Kenley, and the rest were, and, thus, selfishly made a decision for them.

"I truly am a selfish person."

"No…" Klein shook his head.

…

On the sofa in the receptionist area, Leonard watched Megose pull out clumps of her hair as his expression became more and more rigid.

Megose seemed increasingly restless as she constantly picked up the glass for a mouthful of water. She looked at Leonard with a contorted expression.

"I don't know why, but I suddenly feel a little unwell."

Leonard Mitchell was about to reply when he suddenly saw Megose reach for her face. She clawed out a piece of flesh—a long piece of flesh—a piece of flesh stained with blood.

"My face is a little itchy." Megose smiled, a little embarrassed. The edge of her lips spread to where her cheekbones were, revealing a row of white teeth and bright red gums.

FUCK! Leonard cursed out silently. He felt that the situation was worsening way too quickly.

His lips quivering, Leonard turned to listen as his expression immediately turned steely green.

He forced a smile and apologized to Megose, who was clawing out pieces of her flesh.

"I need to use the bathroom."

"Al… right…” Megose's tone became ethereal.

She rubbed her belly and said, "My… child… is a little restless…”

Leonard didn't reply. He hastened his footsteps and approached the partition.

After entering the corridor, Leonard stared deeply at the box of ash in Dunn Smith's hands and exhaled in exasperation.

Following that, his expression turned firm.

"Captain, I'm afraid that it's too late. We have to deal with Megose and her baby immediately. Otherwise, the whole of Tingen will suffer terrible losses. This isn't something that can be avoided just by evacuating the citizens around us. I know that you've already sent such a telegram."

Dunn knitted his eyebrows and asked, unusually stern, "Are you sure that the situation has worsened to such an extent?"

"Yes. In no more than three minutes, Megose will undergo a mutation, and her child will descend upon us," Leonard said with a certain tone.

At the same time, he glanced at the thick, large blood vessel wrapped around Klein's hand and said, "Sealed Artifact 2-105? Let me use it. I can better utilize its abilities."

"Alright." Klein didn't hesitate to hand the Blood Vessel Thief over to Leonard.

That was something he intended to do so from the beginning.

At that moment, Dunn tugged at his collar and patted down his windbreaker. He spoke with a determined tone, "I'll head out with Saint Selena's ashes first. Come out after ten seconds; remember, come out only

after you finish counting to ten. Then, regardless of my condition, direct your strongest attacks at Megose and her baby without wasting any time."

With that said, he turned around and walked towards the partition with the urn of ashes.

"Captain…" Klein let out a shout, his lips dry.

"Captain!" Leonard also shouted.

Dunn stopped and looked back. He had a gentle expression as he said with his mellow voice, "Don't worry about me. I'm not alone. Adelaide, Dwayne, Hitte, and Kenley are all fighting alongside me, no matter what kind of danger I face."

He paused for a moment before speaking, his gray eyes gentle.

"There's no need to be too nervous as well. We're guarding Tingen City."

His lips arched upwards, forming his usual smile.

After saying those words, he didn't stay any longer. He stepped through the partition, his black windbreaker following behind him.

"Captain!" Klein and Leonard shouted at the same time, their tears falling uncontrollably, but Dunn didn't slow down.

We are guardians, but also a bunch of miserable wretches that are constantly fighting against threats and madness.

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CHAPTER 208
CRY

Beep! Beep! Beep! The telegram set up in the Captain's office suddenly came to life, seemingly having received a new telegram.

But Klein and Leonard couldn't be distracted. They were counting the movements of the second hand on the clock as their red eyes welled up with tears.

"10."

"9."

"8."

…

Just then, Dunn Smith carried the silver, bone-like square box into the reception hall with a solemn expression.

Megose, who was pulling out clump after clump of blond hair, tore a wound that was deep enough to show her bones. It was as though she was triggered by something. She suddenly stood and pointed at Dunn Smith in his black windbreaker. She shrieked, "You want to kill my child!

"You want to kill my child!"

Boom! The shrill and terrifying voice reverberated. Klein felt like he was being struck in the head with a sledgehammer. He suddenly forgot to count as he had a headache and felt dizzy.

His vision went red, and there seemed to be liquid flowing from the tip of his nose.

He subconsciously looked sideways, and he saw the corner of Leonard Mitchell's eyes. The tip of his nose and the corners of his lips were covered in fresh blood. His face was extremely pale, and his body was wavering as though he was about to fall.

I'm probably in the same state… Klein reined back his thoughts and continued to count in silence as he skipped two numbers.

"5."

"4."

…

Struck by the terrifyingly sharp voice, Dunn Smith's deep gray eyes were filled with red veins. Every single strand was crystal clear.

The blood vessels in his face protruded out as well; every one of them like a poisonous snake. There was also a gurgle as red liquid flowed out of his ears as well.

Despite that, he did feel dizzy. Other than his right hand pausing, his strong willpower drove him to press down on Saint Selena's urn and open the lid.

Inside the box, there was deep darkness. In the darkness, there was fine resplendent sand. The scene was magically beautiful, just like a starry night being stored in a box.

The surroundings suddenly became dark, and the darkness engulfed the entire reception hall. In the air, there were countless black, cold, and smooth threads were floating.

They surged towards Megose and entangled her almost instantly.

It wasn't like a spider web, but more like the tentacles of some unknown creature!

Megose had already torn out her right eyeball. It hung by a thin cord of flesh underneath her eye socket. She stared at Dunn Smith with hatred as she roared, "You must die!"

Bang! Dunn was cast away by a formless force and slammed heavily into the wall opposite. The wall cracked, and bricks were thrown up.

He spat a mouthful of fresh blood onto the ground, but both his hands were still tightly holding onto Saint Selena's urn. He held onto it for dear life and kept it from falling to the ground.

Those countless black, cold, and smooth threads tightened and bound Megose firmly to the spot. No matter how much blight-tainted flames rose up suddenly, or how her skin began to secrete a liquid that smelt like brimstone, neither of those defenses dealt any damage to the threads holding onto her.

"3!"

"2!"

"1!"

Klein and Leonard dashed out through the partition simultaneously. One of them was holding onto a warm thin gold slice, and the other had already aimed his five fingers with the Blood Vessel Thief wound around his left wrist at Megose.

Megose, who no longer looked human, struggled as flesh protruded from both sides of her shoulders. They were a mixture of blood vessels and green veins, round like a child's head.

Above the two heads, cracks rapidly spread and seemingly turned into a pair of eyes.

Megose suddenly noticed danger approaching, and she opened her mouth. The corner of her lips cracked all the way up to her ears.

She was going to deal the Blaspheme Curse to every enemy that attempted to harm her child!

At that moment, Leonard clenched his left hand into a fist as his wrist made a half turn.

His pale face turned livid, and the vessels protruded like bunch of tiny poisonous worms.

"…” Megose's Blaspheme Curse was left stuck in her throat as it came to a sudden halt.

She seemed to have lost the ability to speak and the ability to evoke curses.

Klein seized the opportunity and muttered an ancient Hermes word in a deep voice.

"Light!"

I want light, and there will be light!

He suddenly felt the thin gold slice that was covered in mysterious patterns become boiling hot as he saw it emit a blinding light, as though it had become a miniature sun.

Right on the heels of that, Klein injected more than half his spirituality into it and threw the Flaring Sun Charm towards the restrained Megose!

The reception hall instantly turned transparent as darkness and gloominess vanished simultaneously. The black fine threads that entangled Megose

shrank as though they were instinctively avoiding something.

But before Megose obtained her freedom, she already saw the sunlight.

At some point in the fight, a hole had ruptured in the ceiling of the Blackthorn Security Company, and the hole went all the way to the rooftop of the third floor. The bright blue sky and glaring sunlight shined through simultaneously.

The thin gold slice combined with the sunlight above Megose's and immediately expanded in size. It went from a spherical light to a sphere with countless flames spiraling around it.

Rumble!

The entire building shook vigorously, and the glass windows on the nearby streets shattered.

However, the power of the spherical light concentrated its might at its core, without dissipating much.

It enveloped Megose, and the light was so glaring that Klein, Dunn, and Leonard couldn't open their eyes.

Klein held back his tears and looked through squinted eyes. He saw that the light had dispersed, but the flames were still soaring. Among them, there were many black ashes dancing in the air.

Megose and the baby in her stomach were nowhere to be seen. Just like the coffee table, water glass, newspaper, and sofa in the area.

Is it over? Did we finish the son of an evil god before it descended upon this world, taking "His" mother out at the same time? Klein still couldn't believe it.

His experience of playing video games told him that the final boss couldn't be taken care of so easily!

Suddenly, he felt goosebumps all over. His Clown instincts told him that there was extreme danger approaching!

Without thinking, Klein rolled to the left abruptly.

Just then, a long arm with an extremely sharp white bone blade cleaved the spot, seemingly out of nowhere. The monstrosity had an abnormal beauty, and it floated in mid-air. It was unbelievably fast and almost impossible to dodge its attacks.

Whoosh!

Klein's clothing on the right side of his chest was ripped apart, his skin ruptured, and his flesh, along with his bones, was split into two!

The wound was so deep that he could almost see one of his lungs.

If it wasn't because he sensed danger approaching beforehand and dodged in time, that slash would've sliced him in half.

But, even so, Klein slowed down. Extreme pain filled his head and scattered his consciousness.

At the end of the white bone blade, a figure rapidly flew out. If it wasn't for the bump on its stomach, perhaps no one could identify it as Megose.

Her hair and dress had been burned entirely. The skin on her face and body was charred black and was peeling off, flake after flake. Her nose had melted, leaving only two small black holes behind. Her eyeballs were nowhere to be seen, and there were faint white flames dancing in the empty sockets.

The two "heads" that had popped up from both sides of Megose's shoulders had been burned away. Her left arm had become the white bone blade that she was holding; it looked demonic, yet holy.

Creak!

As the ground shook, Megose ignored Dunn and Leonard, as well as the black, cold, and smooth fine threads that were hurtling towards her again. She phased over to Klein who had come to a stop after rolling away. She aimed the white bone blade at Klein's neck and was about to slash down.

Suddenly, she heard a voice that contained a rich blasphemous tone.

"Submit!"

Leonard lifted his left hand and aimed his palm at Megose. The Sealed Artifact 2-105 wrapped around his wrist had turned from a thick pale, blood-tainted blood vessel into a crimson "intestine" that had expanded to the point that it looked ready to explode.

With the aid of the Blood Vessel Thief, Leonard had successfully stolen Megose's Blaspheme Curse and was attempting to use her power to seize control of her!

Only an ability at her level was effective!

Under the influence of the Blaspheme Curse, Megose bent her waist, and her knees were constantly trembling. Her motions came to a halt as the surrounding black threads surrounded her as though they had found a delicious prey. Klein also took the opportunity to roll in the opposite direction, leaving a trail of fresh crimson blood behind him.

However, he got some reprieve from his extreme pain and reached his hand into his pocket. He took out the last Flaring Sun Charm.

He took the opportunity when Megose was stationary to finish her off, once and for all!

If she were to hold out until the "baby" was born, the outcome would be beyond their imagination!

Boom!

Megose's head exploded on its own. Her charred skin and flesh flew in all directions.

But her headless body seized the opportunity to shake off the effect of the Blaspheme Curse!

Boom! Megose's charred body transformed into a projectile that shot towards Leonard. Since the Blaspheme Curse had been forcefully disrupted, Leonard was temporarily frozen on the spot.

At that moment, Dunn Smith was still holding onto Saint Selena's urn tightly. His face was abnormally pale, and the black, cold threads that were created was still short of surrounding Megose.

Creak!

Megose slammed into Leonard, throwing him to the wall. The wall collapsed from the impact.

Leonard's bones cracked, and there was blood spewing out from his mouth incessantly. Without even having the urge to struggle, he fainted instantly.

Megose raised her white bone blade, but the countless black threads that emanated from Saint Selena's urn enveloped her again and was about to bind her to the ground.

Without the luxury of time to mind his injuries, Klein quickly took out the thin charm.

Just as he was going to recite the ancient Hermes incantation, something suddenly sounded in the deep, dark, yet quiet room.

"Waaa!"

It was the cry of a baby.

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CHAPTER 209
LIGHT

"Waaa!"

The baby in Megose's stomach cried. It squirmed, wanting to come into this world in a bid to help its mother escape from her predicament.

The black, cold, and smooth threads appeared to suffer a shock as they seemed to be suppressed by an invisible power which led to their retreat backward.

"Waaa!"

Dunn and Klein became dizzy at the same time. They felt their throats contract involuntarily as their contracting air passages instantly stifled them.

Crimson liquid flowed from their nostrils, their eyes, and their ears. All of their capillaries seemed to have ruptured.

If it wasn't for the fact that Klein had undergone the torture of hearing the mutterings and ravings every time he headed to the world above the gray fog, as well as Dunn holding onto the ashes of Saint Selena, they definitely would've fainted on the spot, just like Leonard Mitchell.

Megose's headless body turned over and looked at Klein who saw her charred skin and flesh peeling to the ground, and the holy, yet evil white bone blade.

Having escaped its influence thanks to his rich experience, Klein immediately felt his scalp tingle and forgot about the pain in his right chest. He seemed to witness his enemy charge towards him maniacally, not giving him any time to recite the incantation, infuse spirituality, and throw out the Flaring Sun Charm.

Just as he was about to dodge the attack, Klein saw Megose suddenly pause. He saw Dunn Smith's black windbreaker fluttering, and the Captain diagonally across him had buried his head. There were multiple thick twitching objects on his back as if they were venomous snakes or tentacles —or monsters!

Dunn was using his abilities as a Nightmare to forcefully impede Megose's movements.

*Bam! Bam! Bam! *With a mere struggle from Megose, the thick tentacle-like objects that protruded from Dunn's back exploded at the same time!

A large amount of blood splattered out, covering every corner of the room like rain.

Dunn wasn't disappointed at the result, for the blood had been absorbed by the black threads created by Saint Selena's ashes.

They had been absorbed!

The countless cold, smooth, tentacle-like threads entered a frenzy. They swarmed forward and bound Megose tightly, wrapping themselves around her bulging, squirming stomach.

An opportunity!

Klein was as nervous as he was excited. He prepared to shout the ancient Hermes word for "Light."

"Waaa! Waaa! Waaa!"

The cries of a baby could be heard once again, more frequent, and more incessant this time around!

The countless black threads suddenly came to a pause, retreating and trembling again as if they had all been struck by lightning.

Dunn's expression changed when he realized that Megose was about to free herself. Without hesitation, he retracted his right palm, formed a claw, and stabbed it into his own chest—his left chest!

He quickly pulled out his right hand, his fingers holding a bloody heart tightly. It was a still-beating heart that brought with it the sereneness of the night and a dream.

Captain… Klein watched helplessly as Dunn Smith stuffed the heart into the urn containing Saint Selena's ashes. His vision quickly blurred.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Crying that sounded like a late-night nightmare resounded. The countless cold and serene threads once again resumed their efforts as they wrapped themselves tightly around Megose!

This time, they didn't loosen their bindings despite the cries coming from the baby in Megose's stomach. In fact, they even sealed the terrifying sounds within the body!

Klein's tears fell together with his blood. He uttered a simple Hermes term in a deep voice, "Light!"

The light that illuminates the darkness! The light that brings warmth!

He infused almost all of his remaining spirituality into the thin gold piece etched with mysterious symbols, causing his mind to immediately turn blank and dizzy.

Having mustered the last of his strength, Klein tossed out the Flaring Sun Charm at Megose, who was still bound by the countless black threads.

The black threads didn't retract this time, having not followed their instincts, as if they were being willed by someone.

Thump! Thump!

Dunn's fresh heart was still beating within the box containing Saint Selena's ashes.

The sunlight once again shone in from the hole in the ceiling, shining through all three stories, right into the Blackthorn Security Company, as if it were a corporeal pillar.

It was guided here by the Flaring Sun Charm, and it was focused on Megose.

The sunlight fused with the top of the headless monster, and then exploded like the sun!

Rumble!

In the burning white splendor, Klein closed his eyes. This last scene was etched deep into his mind.

Megose's body lost its left arm, head, and multiple pieces of flesh. Its charred body crumbled instantly. The half-illusory, terrifying creature within her body no longer had the support of a physical body and couldn't complete the last stage of its transformation. It turned into a furious ball of black gas, dissolving amidst the light and flames.

Rumble!

The entire building shook violently, but this was only due to the released energy of the Flaring Sun Charm.

The charm was different from a normal bomb. Its powers were concentrated, yet restrained!

Klein fought to stabilize his body. He opened his eyes and looked ahead a few seconds later.

He saw that the walls had crumbled. He saw a charred circle where Megose once stood. Surprisingly, the floor had only melted slightly.

He saw a burned, bloody placenta on the ground. He saw Dunn Smith standing on the spot, still wearing his black windbreaker. He saw the heart in the box of Saint Selena's ashes still beating slowly. He saw Leonard Mitchell lying on the opposite side; his outcome was unknown.

The exhausted Klein felt elated and felt that he could still use ritualistic magic to save the Captain. He felt that Megose and her baby were truly finished. No—it was more accurate to say that the latter had suffered an interruption and was exorcised.

At that moment, Dunn Smith turned to look at Klein. His pale face had a warm and relaxed expression, and his voice still as mellow as it usually was.

"We saved Tingen."

After saying this, it was as if he had returned to the time when he was twenty. He no longer appeared stern and serious as he winked at Klein with his left eye.

Klein's expression froze. He saw the heart in the box of Saint's Selena's ashes stop beating. It turned into a resplendent ball of light before scattering into the surroundings. He saw the captain fall backward, his arms losing their strength.

It felt like the scene was made up of a series of paintings, but Klein could do nothing to stop it.

Thump!

The box of Saint Selena's ashes fell onto the ground, just like Klein's heart.

Thud! Thud! Even though the box wasn't covered, the darkness within the box sealed the opening, preventing the resplendent sand-like ashes from falling out. The box rolled a distance away towards Klein.

Dunn Smith fell to the wrecked floor, his deep gray eyes having lost all their luster. He was looking at the hole in the ceiling, the sunlight pouring down on his face.

Captain! Klein's vision blurred once again. He wanted to shout, but that word and the subsequence words were stuck in his throat.

We miss you too…

At that moment, the box containing Saint Selena's ashes had rolled to his feet.

Suddenly, Klein felt a pain in his chest, his pupils violently constricted as he froze in place.

He looked down to see a slightly pale palm, drenched in blood, coming out the left side of his chest.

Megose isn't dead… No, a new enemy… The mastermind behind the scenes… Am I going to die?

Klein quickly lost his consciousness, his eyes almost losing focus. His body slumped to the side.

His breathing gradually slowed and, he finally felt the palm pull back quickly. He saw a pair of brand new leather boots, and a hand reaching downward, a slightly pale hand.

It grabbed the urn of Saint Selena's ashes.

Klein's vision went black, and he lost all consciousness.

…

Burned and shattered objects were scattered around in the now destroyed Blackthorn Security Company, but there wasn't a single sound, it was just like a cemetery.

A few minutes later, Leonard Mitchell's body moved, his eyes opening slowly.

He propped himself up with difficulty and surveyed the surroundings. He saw Dunn Smith on the ground. He also saw Klein who had his eyes staring wide as a look of shock was plastered across his face. Dunn and Klein both had visible wounds on the left sides of their chests.

No… Leonard squeezed out the word from his throat as he staggered towards Klein's corpse, that wasn't far away from Dunn.

He kept checking them, going between the two repeatedly, but all he could do was accept this irreversible truth.

Leonard's knees buckled as his knees plopped to the ground. His green eyes were filled with pain as tears streamed down his cheeks, washing away the blood and dust.

He turned his head and listened for two seconds and suddenly sprawled forward. He let out an angry roar and clenched his palms into fists, and heavily pounded the floor.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Leonard kept tearing up as he pounded the floor. Amidst his sorrow was a feeling of clear hatred and a clear sense of self-abhorrence.

Thud! Thud! Thud! Leonard looked up when he heard the sounds of hurried footsteps and saw the members of the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind that had just arrived at the scene through his blurred vision.

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CHAPTER 210
STORY

In a Tingen suburb, there was a house with a green lawn.

The house had a garden that had begun to wither at the beginning of September. Attached to the house was a crimson chimney.

There was a desk next to the window in the bedroom of that house. An ordinary notebook was spread open on the table.

A slightly pale hand flipped the notebook to the very first page, then it quickly flipped to the back.

As the paper flipped, the rows of words appeared faintly.

Regence, a member from the Secret Order, sold the Antigonus family's notebook as an ordinary ancient book by accident due to the influence both of weariness and illusions. It was a coincidence that made logical sense.

Affected by the calling of the Antigonus family's bloodline, the notebook secretly affects its owners, one after the other. After repeated changes in ownership, it came to Tingen. It fell into the hands of the members of the Aurora Order—Sirius Arapis and Hanass Vincent.

After they flipped through the content that temporarily appeared in the notebook and copied the corresponding potion formulas, Sirius and Hanass were worried that the Secret Order, who were good at divination, would track them down. After discussing it, they decided to avoid the risk by selling it to another person.

They didn't wait for Mr. Z's reply; perhaps because he stayed at Enmat Harbor.

Through Sirius's introduction, Hanass got to know Welch McGovern from the Khoy University's Department of History. Then, Hanass sold the Antigonus family's notebook to McGovern as an ordinary ancient book.

Subsequently, Sirius was attracted by the treasure that was said to exist on the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range. He started to visit the Deweyville Library and research the mountain. He didn't think that there would be any problems, so he left his real address and name. That aligned with his personality.

During this process, he acquainted himself with Lanevus, who was reading up on information about iron mines to set up a scam.

Lanevus's hidden lunacy and swindling ability were well appreciated by Sirius. He decided to nurture him into a member of the Aurora Order. Of course, before that, an investigation was inevitable.

*Sirius covertly informed Lanevus about the evil ritual of praying to the True Creator to deliver "His" spawn into this world. But he knew that the possibility of Lanevus succeeding was very low, because the difficulty level of the ritual was very high, and the requirements were very harsh. However, the latter expressed his strong interest in the matter, tempted by the possibility of obtaining a deity's approval. He planned to complete the ritual simultaneously as he carried out the plans of establishing his steelworks company. *

The cunning Lanevus could tell that there was something fishy about Sirius Arapis. But for his personal goal, he didn't expose him.

He visited Hood Eugen in the asylum once again. They had known each other long ago, and they knew about their respective situations.

After a dark divination, the Antigonus family's notebook was awakened fully. Welch and his classmate died. The lucky survivor, Klein Moretti, sent it to Ray Bieber's house under the influence of the notebook. It was a destined ending.

Many rows were scribbled off and new content followed.

For some baffling reason, and a lack of sufficient explanations, Klein didn't commit suicide after that and somehow managed to stay alive.

In the Nighthawks' investigation of Welch's case that followed, he met Dunn Smith and joined the Nighthawks.

Although it had already exceeded Ince Zangwill's description, it didn't affect the development of the story.

Bacchus and his brothers were down on their luck. They lost their last chip at the gambling tables and were drowning in debt. In a bid to obtain money, they decided to kidnap and blackmail the somewhat wealthy individuals.

When they were looking for their final hideout, they chanced upon the room opposite Ray Bieber's apartment.

By then, Ray Bieber was already seduced by the power offered by the Antigonus family's notebook. He hoped to digest the gift left behind by his ancestors.

However, he was in a semi-insane state, and he couldn't make the best and safest choice. He abandoned his dead mother, but he continued remaining in Tingen City. He only found a more elusive spot to carry out his digestion ritual. It was truly pathetic. If he had been slightly smarter, the story could've become even more complicated, but his decision was made based on his instincts and his poor state of mind.

Bacchus and company purchased weapons and took the youngest son, Elliott, of the tobacco merchant, Vickroy, and held him for ransom.

Finally, they successfully carried out the abduction and took Elliot back to the apartment opposite Ray Bieber's. Vickroy's butler was entrusted with looking for help from a security company.

Because of Welch's mysterious death, security companies were short on hands. Klee chanced upon a deliveryman and happened to discover the existence of the Blackthorn Security Company.

Leonard Mitchell and Klein accepted the job. Relying on their Beyonder powers, they quickly saved the merchant's son. Regrettably, Klein didn't immediately realize that clues to the Antigonus family's notebook were in the apartment opposite them.

However, his spirituality reminded him in his dream. As such, the Tingen Nighthawks discovered corresponding clues.

…

Sealed Artifact 2-049 arrived in Tingen. With the aid of the Antigonus family's puppet, Dunn Smith led the Nighthawks to find Ray Bieber before interrupting his digestion procedure.

Ray Bieber became a monster, and the situation was out of control.

In the end, the Nighthawks skillfully worked together and took care of Monster Bieber, but they immediately faced the attack of a member from the Secret Order.

More rows were scribbled away again, and the original content was impossible to read.

*Leonard Mitchell, who possesses a secret, was going to end the situation. Before he could, Klein, who was supposed to be doomed, killed the Sequence 7 member from the Secret Order in an inexplicable manner. *

That didn't affect the development of the story. Dunn Smith got in touch with the Antigonus family's notebook and flipped through its content. From that point onwards, he was secretly tainted!

…

Having finished with all his preparations, Lanevus beguiled Hood Eugen and used him to assist in his ritual. They tricked Lanevus's fiancée, Megose, to become the vessel that would carry the True Creator's spawn.

Lanevus had almost no possibility of success. The most serious problem was that even though Megose would be protected by the ritual's power, she wouldn't be able to withstand the sexual intercourse with the illusory projection of a deity. It would cost her her life on the altar.

At that moment, the kind Ince Zangwill helped Lanevus in secret. He split off half a piece of a descendant of Death's characteristic that he obtained and planted it into Megose's body ahead of time.

Hood Eugen made Megose enter a semi-unconscious state and convinced her that the True Creator's illusory projection was Lanevus. Nourished by the accumulated resentment, gloominess, and oppression of the factory district, the ritual succeeded. Megose was pregnant with the True Creator's spawn. The deity saw through the coincidences, but since "He" wished to break through the shackles placed on him by the seven deities, "He" didn't refuse.

Hood Eugen was contaminated.

After the ritual succeeded, the mad Lanevus regained his rationality. He clearly knew that if the deity's spawn was to descend into the world, Lanevus, himself, would become one of the sacrificial offerings. How could a mortal be the father of a deity's son? This was blasphemy of the highest order!

Lanevus decided to leave Tingen ahead of time and left clues to the Nighthawks, the Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind so that they could resolve the repercussions of his actions. There was ultimately a price needed for lunacy.

However, Lanevus didn't write the letter directly to the Beyonder squads. He thought it would make him look stupid.

He decided to leave the letter in one of the houses that he rented. He pretended to be playing a game with the Beyonders from official bodies. As such, he didn't bring up Hood Eugen's contamination and brought with him everything that he had obtained.

Just in case, he informed Sirius Arapis in the safest way he could. The latter didn't quite believe him, but he could faintly feel the possibility of success.

…

Selena Wood accidentally chanced upon the real magic mirror divination incantation from her mysticism teacher, Hanass Vincent.

Her bold attempt was interrupted by Klein Moretti by coincidence. The latter successfully resolved this supernatural incident that might've caused serious casualties.

The Nighthawks then investigated Hanass Vincent who had recently been awarded. Therefore, Dunn Smith coincidently saw a clear image of the True Creator in his dream and suffered severe injuries.

However, he wasn't contaminated because of what happened. That would've been noticed by the upper echelons of the Nighthawks.

The injury made Dunn Smith's contamination by the Antigonus family notebook worsen. His absent-mindedness and forgetfulness worsened, and he was getting closer and closer to satisfying Ince Zangwill's requirements.

…

Many rows were scribbled away again.

Seriously unbelievable! Klein Moretti noticed Ince Zangwill's secret influence and saw the crimson chimney.

Th-this is because he was reminded by the teacher from the Khoy University's Department of History, Azik. He possesses many secrets.

But even so, it's astounding enough for Klein to discover actual clues. It's unexplainable.

Regardless of the reason, Ince Zangwill continued to act, and the story continues.

Klein coincidently ran into Sirius at the library and had no choice but to kill him. Hence, the clues leading to Lanevus were abruptly severed, and the discovery of the problem was delayed.

…

Klein met Megose, but his spirituality stopped him from observing her closely. However, he didn't notice the subtle abnormality. That is logical. Our stories aren't made up randomly.

He searched for the red chimney, but he always opted for a route that didn't include his target. Maybe in another two or three months, when he was on the last batch, he would find the real red chimney house.

…

Rows and rows of writings were scribbled away, more than all of the previous rows added together.

Dunn Smith's problem was alleviated! His condition obviously became better! He actually mastered the "acting method!"

And this was taught to him by Klein Moretti, who found inspiration from Daly Simone and Old Neil's example. No—Ince Zangwill didn't believe that, but he could only change his original plans slightly.

New elements in the story came to play.

Azik decided to go to Backlund in search of his lost memories.

It wasn't long until Klein and Dunn found clues from Hood Eugen.

…

In order to ensure that Tingen City's Conservative Party and New Party would be in complete opposition, Madam Sharon, who wanted to vent the accumulated madness after her transformation, decided to take the risk and murder Member of Parliament John Maynard.

"Her motive wasn't strong enough, but she took action anyway. There are always times when people are not clear-minded enough, and she happened to be in that stage. Besides, she was confident that she wouldn't be discovered.

Maynard's wife found the Blackthorn Security Company through the tobacco merchant, Vickroy. They didn't disappoint her, and they quickly found Madam Sharon's abnormality.

Dunn Smith, who possessed power that was close to Sequence 6, decided to take action first. He passed the Sealed Artifact 3-0271 to Kenley.

When the two of them and Klein returned to Madam Sharon's residence, Dunn attempted to pull her into a dream to control her from a distance."

It was a good plan, but, unfortunately, Madam Sharon happened to have the statue of the Primordial Demoness by her side.

Hence, the Nighthawks' plan failed. Kenley reflected himself in the mirror due to his nervousness and saw himself.

Madam Sharon was taken care of while Kenley died. Dunn blamed himself and consumed Kenley's Beyonder characteristic as he usually did. His digestion procedure was interrupted as a result and was delayed. As such, his mental state became unstable.

Under the circumstances, Leonard and Klein noticed the letter left behind by Lanevus.

Megose received a baffling summoning and arrived at Zouteland Street. She entered the Blackthorn Security Company, and the baby in her stomach was at a critical point in its development. It couldn't stop her urges.

Dunn made a detailed plan, a plan that was right, but he made one mistake. If he steeled his resolve to Megose behind Chanis Gate, he would've stood a chance with the aid of the environment and the items present. If he wanted to wait for backup, he definitely shouldn't have just taken Saint Selena's urn out.

Unfortunately, Dunn's mind wasn't in the right place due to recent events, and he didn't think of the most critical point. A diety's son would be able to feel the threat of the Saint's urn. Hence, it was triggered and started to absorb its mother's strength in a bid to be born ahead of time, even though it wasn't exactly ready.

Azik was in Backlund, but he wasn't a Traveler, so he couldn't rush back in such short notice.

A few rows were scribbled away.

Megose became a monster, and the fight began. With the aid of the Saint's urn, Blood Vessel Thief, and two high-level charms that strangely appeared, Megose died and the deity's son was exorcized. Dunn Smith died as a result, and the power of Saint Selena's ashes was severely damaged as well. That went perfectly with Ince Zangwill's intentions.

Ince Zangwill didn't get a chance to showcase himself, but it didn't hinder him from achieving his goal.

He killed Klein Moretti, the fellow who kept disrupting his plans, and he took away Saint Selena's ashes.

Ince Zangwill set up a ritual with the remaining half of the characteristic of Death's descendant. He consumed Saint Selena's ashes and successfully advanced from Sequence 5 of the Death Sequence pathway, Gatekeeper, to Sequence 4 of the Evernight Sequence pathway, Nightwatcher. As such, he received godhood characteristics and became a Demigod.

The sun continues to shine brilliantly on the land. Nearly no one in Tingen City realized how they narrowly escaped a huge disaster. Monster Ademisaul would be left very confused about it.

The notebook was flipped to the last page. A middle-aged man that was holding onto the book had dark blond hair, a dark blue eye that was nearly black, a tall nose, and tightly pursed lips. His facial features were like that of a statue and didn't have a single wrinkle. He held a classic quill with his slightly pale hand and wrote a line clearly without dipping into any ink.

He ended with a simple sentence.

Tingen's story ends here.

The papers rustled as he closed the book, leaving only a brown cover.

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CHAPTER 211
FUNERAL

In the basement of Saint Selena Cathedral, in the guardroom outside Chanis Gate.

Leonard Mitchell was leaning on the back of his chair, his legs were propped up on the table. His eyes were vacant without any focus.

Even though he had been healed using ritualistic magic, he still looked terrible, as if he had obtained reprieve from a severe illness without fully recovering.

At the moment, the powerful Beyonders sent by the Holy Cathedral were creating another seal behind the Chanis Gate since the ashes of Saint Selena was lost. They had conflicting opinions; some wanting to fill in the gap of power using a new holy item, while the others believed that there was no need to go through all the trouble. After all, to the Church of the Evernight Goddess, holy items were rare and incredibly precious. What they suggested was lowering the presence of the Nighthawks in Tingen and transferring the artifacts with living characteristics or difficult-to-seal artifacts to the headquarters at the Cathedral of Serenity in Backlund's diocese, only leaving behind those that could be controlled more easily.

They intended to send a telegram to propose a meeting of the higher-ups, to get a vote from the archbishops and high-ranking deacons.

Leonard was uninterested in this debate. He felt as if he had become a living corpse, with no sorrow, grief, agitation, or excitement. He was abnormally numb. He didn't want to face anyone. All he wanted was to stay alone in the corner.

Occasionally, he would feel puzzled about why the "murderer" would only take away Klein's Beyonder characteristic and leave Captain Dunn Smith's one intact.

Thud. Thud. Thud. Footsteps reverberated in the corridor. Seeka Tron, whose right arm had been bandaged, appeared at the door of the guardroom.

While Klein and the others were attacking Megose and attempting to save Tingen City, she and the Keepers within Chanis Gate were doing battle against a portion of the Sealed Artifacts. If it wasn't for the timely arrival of the members of the Mandated Punishers and the Machinery Hivemind, or the eventual arrival of the reinforcements from the Holy Cathedral, she also might've lost her life.

But even so, the elderly Keeper failed to last untill the end. He fought to his death, under the call of duty.

"Leonard, I found an unencrypted telegram in the Captain's office. It was sent over by the Holy Cathedral," Seeka Tron said.

Leonard's green eyes moved slightly, finally coming to life. He faintly recalled the sound of a new telegram coming in, but the battle was about to begin. He and Klein didn't have the time to pay attention to it.

"What does it say?" Leonard noticed that his tone was unusually raspy.

The white-haired and black-eyed Seeka Tron replied without hesitation, "Beware of Ince Zangwill. Beware of Sealed Artifact 0-08."

"Ince Zangwill, the archbishop that betrayed the Church, the Gatekeeper who failed his advancement… Sealed Artifact 0-08, an ordinary looking quill…" Leonard muttered at first as he searched his memories, then he tilted his head to the side.

He suddenly narrowed his eyes, the dispirited feelings and sadness disappeared from his body.

"So that's how it was…" Leonard pulled his feet back and stood up, his green eyes burning with a passion.

He looked at Seeka Tron and said, "I intend to apply to join the Red Gloves."

The Red Gloves was a code name for the elite team of Nighthawks. Under normal circumstances, Nighthawk teams were situated locally and had regions under their jurisdiction. They were not permitted to capture criminals outside of their area of jurisdiction without permission. As such, some evildoers would change their location after every crime, making it terribly inconvenient for the Nighthawks.

To deal with this, the Church of the Evernight Goddess set up the Red Gloves. They were carefully selected elites, some even possessing incomplete holy items. Their mission was to reinforce Nighthawk teams that had called for help, as well as track down and arrest evildoers without any restrictions.

In some circles, they were also called "Pursuers" or "Hunting Dogs."

"Red Gloves? But their lowest requirement is Sequence 7… Besides, the dangers the Red Gloves face are many times higher than an ordinary Nighthawk Squad," Seeka Tron said in concern and doubt.

Leonard smiled coldly.

"I'm close to advancing soon."

His eyes became cold. He clenched his teeth and said to himself.

I want revenge!

Ince Zangwill, you must live until the day I become powerful enough!

"Alright…" Seeka seemed to have guessed Leonard's thoughts. She sighed. "Almost half of our team will be new faces. It's rare to see a Nighthawk team become so ravaged…"

Leonard's expression darkened. He clenched his teeth and asked, "Are the bodies ready?"

"Yes." Seeka nodded indiscernibly.

Leonard suddenly stepped towards the door.

"I'll notify their families."

I'll deal with the scene I don't want to deal with the most.

I'll do it…

…

At 2 Daffodil Street, Melissa sat on the sofa, inspecting the three tickets in her hands. She was looking at the words, the printed date, and the seat numbers.

Benson was sitting beside her, observing his sister with a smile. He had a relaxed posture.

Suddenly, they heard the doorbell. *Ding dong, ding dong.*

Melissa glanced at their busy maid Bella, then she took the three tickets with her and stood up, looking a little confused. She briskly ran to the door.

Her black hair was shinier than it was before, her face no longer skinny. The color of her skin had a ruddy color, and her brown eyes looked brighter and energetic.

Twisting the handle and opening the door, Melissa froze for a moment. She didn't recognize their visitor.

It was a young man with black hair and green eyes. He looked handsome, but his face was unusually pale. Hidden in his eyes was deep sorrow.

"May I know who you are?" Melissa asked, feeling somewhat lost.

Leonard had specially draped a black formal coat over his white shirt. He said in a raspy voice, "I'm a colleague of your brother Klein.

Melissa's heart suddenly skipped a beat. She instinctively tiptoed to look behind Leonard but didn't notice anything.

She said with a strange quiver in her voice, "Where's Klein?"

Leonard closed his eyes, inhaling as he said, "I'm very sorry, your brother Klein died at the hands of an evil criminal while he was trying to save others. He's a hero, a true hero."

Melissa widened her eyes slowly, her body shaking indiscernibly. The three tickets in her hands dropped helplessly onto the floor.

The tickets faced upward, revealing the name of the play—"The Return of the Count."

…

Sitting in the Moretti family's living room, Leonard didn't dare to look directly at Melissa and Benson.

But he couldn't stop scenes of what they looked like from flashing through his mind.

That girl filled with youthfulness and vibrancy had her eyes wide open. She didn't speak, and her eyes were unfocused. Her silence made her appear like

a puppet.

The man who looked a little like Klein maintained a normal posture, but he would slip into a daze from time to time. His words came out slowly.

"That's the gist of the matter. I'm very sorry that I was unable to prevent it in a timely manner. The Blackthorn Security Company, the police department, and those that he helped have promised a bereavement compensation of about 6000 pounds…" Leonard said, as his eyes darted around.

Suddenly, Benson interrupted him. His voice was hoarse as he asked, "Where's his body? I'm asking where's Klein's body?"

He puckered his lips and paused.

"When can we see him?"

"In the company. You can see him now," Leonard answered, unable to mask his grief.

"Alright." Benson moved his rigid lips with great difficulty. "Let me use the bathroom first."

Without waiting for Leonard's reply, he quickly entered the bathroom and slammed the door closed.

He stood in front of the sink and turned on the tap, allowing the water to flow.

He bent down and repeatedly splashed water onto his face.

As he did that, his actions came to a sudden stop. Nothing changed for a long time, leaving only the sound of running water reverberating in the bathroom.

A few minutes later, Benson lifted his head and looked into the mirror. He saw that his face was covered in water droplets, the redness in his eyes was impossible to hide now.

…

A few days later, in a corner of the Raphael Cemetery.

After finishing Dunn's funeral, the crowd gathered before a new tombstone. On it was Klein's black-and-white photograph, a very scholarly photograph.

Melissa stood before the grave, her eyes without focus. Beside her, Elizabeth kept wiping away her tears.

Leonard, Benson, Frye, and Bredt carried the coffin and walked over, lowering the coffin into the grave.

After the priest gave the eulogy and individual prayers, the grave was filled with soil, covering the black coffin bit by bit.

At this moment, Melissa knelt down and tossed in the copper whistle she found on her brother's body.

Leonard turned and looked at the scene, his heart wincing. However, he admired how strong this girl was. He knew that this girl didn't cry after receiving the bad news. Instead, she stayed pitifully quiet.

The grave was leveled and a stone slab was laid over it. Leonard took a final look at Klein's tombstone. There were three lines to his epitaph:

The best elder brother,

The best younger brother,

The best colleague.

Under the mournful atmosphere, the members of the Blackthorn Security Company gradually left. Selena and Elizabeth also bade farewell under the urging of their families. The only people left behind were Benson and Melissa.

"I'll get a rental carriage…" Benson was in a terrible condition, it was as if he hadn't slept for a long time.

"Alright." Melissa nodded.

After seeing her brother leave, she turned to look at the tombstone.

She squatted down and buried her face in her arms.

After some silence, Melissa suddenly scolded, "Stupid!"

She cried as she wept silently. Her tears just wouldn't stop.

…

Night time, at the Raphael Cemetery.

The copper-skinned Azik stood in front of Klein's grave holding a bouquet of white flowers. He didn't speak for the longest time until he finally sighed and muttered to himself, "I'm sorry, I was ten minutes late. But I think I know who it was…"

He bent over and set the bouquet of flowers down before turning to leave the cemetery. He also left Tingen, but he didn't retrieve the copper whistle.

The place was quiet and serene under the illumination of the crimson moonlight.

Suddenly, the stone slab sealing the grave was flipped open. A pale hand extended out from the soil.

A hand came out!

Whoosh!

The gravestone was shoved aside. The lid of the coffin was pushed open. Klein sat upright and looked around, lost.

His memory was still frozen at the scene with the brand new leather boots, and the palm that grabbed onto the urn of Saint Selena's ashes. Everything after that felt like a dreamless sleep.

Klein instinctively lowered his head and unbuttoned his shirt. He looked at the left side of his chest, only to see that his ravaged injury and missing heart were squirming as they healed, similar to how he recovered from the bullet wound through his temple back when he looked into the mirror. The only difference was that this time, the recovery was much slower and much more difficult.

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CHAPTER 212
AVENGER

In the northern part of the Loen Kingdom, the September breeze, that had an additional coldness to it, howled through the cemetery. It was even gloomier and colder than usual.

The cold jolted Klein back to his senses as he muttered with a rueful smile, "It looks like there are still some secrets behind my transmigration…

"But it seems like I'll only be able to resurrect another two times at most, not any more… And if I were to minced up or completely crushed, who knows if this recovery ability that doesn't usually appear would even be useful…”

…

After half a minute, Klein buttoned his suit and realized that he was wearing his newest shirt and tuxedo, but they were now covered in soil and dirt.

**… Benson and Melissa really have no idea how to save money… **The thought popped into his head. He supported his weight on his hand and flipped up into a standing position, realizing that he still had his Clown abilities.

The best elder brother… The best younger brother… The best colleague… Klein looked at his tombstone and read the inscription. He felt his heart wince, seemingly sensing the despondent feelings Melissa and Benson had experienced.

**This is probably even more depressing than watching Captain die before my eyes… **He sighed and retracted his gaze. He squatted down and closed the coffin lid.

His thoughts were still scattered, but Klein knew that he had to take care of the scene as soon as possible and not let anyone notice.

Resurrection wasn't something any commoner could accept!

If the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind learned of this, Klein believed that he wouldn't have a great ending. Of course, if it was on Earth, he could deceive the people into believing that he was the blessed one of God, the man of salvation, had he consumed the Lawyer or Swindler potions. However, in the world he was in, there was a real god, a real god that could respond to rituals!

He scraped the soil back together and covered it with the stone slab. Klein clapped his hands and stood up once again.

At that moment, the scene didn't appear strange. He was just like a gentleman who came to offer his condolences late at night. The only oddity was that the person in the photo on the tombstone looked exactly like him.

During the process of filling his grave, his spirituality noticed the existence of Azik's copper whistle. Hence, he dug it out and wiped it clean.

However, Klein didn't intend to summon the messenger immediately. He decided to figure out the situation first.

Klein lifted his left hand and saw the topaz pendant that was still wrapped around his wrist.

"I guess this is considered a burial object?" He gave a self-deprecating laugh and took off the pendulum. He looked around, and his face grew solemn. “…Captain should be buried in this cemetery as well, I guess…”

He changed directions twice and finally determined the location of Dunn's tombstone using the pendulum.

With the moonlight's aid, Klein walked around and searched for about fifteen minutes until he finally saw Captain's monochrome photo. It had a gentle expression, high hairline, gray eyes—nothing unusual compared to before.

Under Dunn's photo was his name, date of birth, date of death, and epitaph.

The true guardian,

The most trusted partner,

The Captain forever.

Klein looked in stunned silence and somehow his sight grew blurry for some baffling reason. He felt as though he had returned to that day again. He saw the Captain turn his head to him and wink. He spoke with a mellow and relaxed voice.

"We saved Tingen."

Captain… Klein shouted in silence.

He stood there like a statue for a good few minutes until he suddenly said with a smile, "Captain, your mental state was definitely not the best that day. You even said things like you could bring Old Neil into the dreamland if he hadn't lost control. He was a Mystery Pryer, and you're a Nightmare. You couldn't consume the Beyonder characteristic that he left behind. Yes… You didn't ask me what powerful offensive attacks I had. Was it trust, or did you forget about it… But, you definitely guessed something… I only took one Sealed Artifact and said it was for Leonard. Even without a brain, you could've guessed that I had the extra means for a powerful attack."

Having said that, Klein paused, then he shook his head and sighed.

"I have no idea what I am now. Maybe I'm just an evil spirit that has clawed its way back from hell to seek revenge…”

As he spoke, he suddenly stopped. His tears streamed down his cheeks and finally, he shouted softly with a choking voice, "Captain… We miss you too!"

Klein felt the cold breeze blow past him as he lifted his hands to wipe his tears and blow his nose.

He became silent again and found a hidden spot nearby. He took four steps counterclockwise and entered the world above the gray fog.

He wanted to find the person that killed him with the aid of divination. He wanted to know the murderer who triggered all of this!

As he's already appeared before me, I'm sure that I can divine some information… Klein pursed his lips tightly together and saw the lofty palace and ancient mottled table as usual.

He took the seat that belonged to The Fool. A yellowish-brown goatskin and fountain pen appeared before him.

Since his physical body in reality was under limited protection, Klein didn't delay and wrote down his divination statement after a moment's thought.

"The person who killed me."

He recited it seven times and leaned back into the chair. He entered his dream with the aid of Cogitation.

In the blurry world, there were countless points of light dancing and gathering. In the end, they formed a scene.

A pair of brand new leather boots, a pair of slightly pale hands, and the Saint Selena's urn that was held by those hands.

He looked up, and Klein saw a middle-aged man with short, dark blond hair.

He wore a black two-button suit, and one of his eyes was obviously blind while the other one was so blue that it was almost black. His facial features were like carvings, and his face had no wrinkles at all.

The image shattered and Klein woke up from his dream. His eyebrows were tightly knitted. He found his murderer very familiar.

As a Seer, he quickly understood why he found the person familiar. It was because he had seen the man's photo on a wanted notice!

The murderer was Ince Zangwill! He was the former Archbishop of the Church of the Evernight Goddess who took Sealed Artifact 0-08. He had failed to advance as a Gatekeeper!

"It's him!" Countless images flashed through Klein's head, and they finally stopped on the scene when Ince Zangwill picked up Saint Selena's urn.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein extended his hands and rapped the edge of the long bronze table. He felt that he suddenly understood many things.

"The Captain said that a Beyonder that dies normally would leave behind a Beyonder characteristic. When gathered together, they're equivalent to a potion that lacks the supplementary ingredients.

"In other words, as long as one knows the corresponding supplementary ingredients, they can advance using "remains". Of course, one cannot consume beyond their level, as it would easily lead to a loss of control or going insane.

"Hmm… Becoming a High-Sequence Beyonder would require the accompaniment of some special ritual. That was mentioned in the incomplete Unshadowed formula… The subsequent advancements would require a ritual as well…

"Ince Zangwill is a Gatekeeper, a Sequence 5 from the Death Sequence pathway. He wanted to become a High-Sequence Beyonder, a Demigod. Based on the situation allowed by the exchanging of Sequences, he had three choices. One was obviously Sequence 4 in the Death Sequence pathway, second was Sequence 4 in the Sleepless Sequence pathway; and third was Sequence 4 in the God of Combat Sequence pathway, Demon Hunter.

"Saint Selena was a Saint. She was either Sequence 4 or Sequence 3. Her urn corresponds to one of the two Sequence potions… Ince Zangwill, who was a former Archbishop, definitely knew exactly which one she was, and he definitely knew the required supplementary ingredients…

"Was his true motive in planning all of this to get Saint Selena's ashes and advance to Sequence 4 in the Sleepless pathway?

"Hmm, the skull of Death's descendant, that might be an ingredient needed for the special ritual. It was from the Death Sequence pathway, after all.

"From the looks of it, his target was the Captain, and not me. He really was the mastermind behind all this…"

Having figured this out, Klein wrote down a corresponding divination statement. He took his pendulum and let the topaz hang above the surface of the paper.

After he recited the statement, he opened his eyes and saw the topaz pendant spinning clockwise.

It meant that the information he provided was sufficient, and the divination was successful!

It meant that Ince Zangwill had really plotted the series of events in order to get Saint Selena's ashes, to advance to Sequence 4!

Klein rapped on the edge of the table again as he mulled over a different question.

"Ince Zangwill was merely a Sequence 5 Gatekeeper. Relying on him alone, would make it impossible for him to create so many coincidences. For instance, for Megose to follow his "arrangements" and visit the Nighthawks at the correct time.

"So, is it the power of Sealed Artifact 0-08?

"Its appearance is that of an ordinary quill… Its function is to write down events that are bound to happen?

"No, it couldn't be that easy… Otherwise, Ince Zangwill could write that Saint Selena's urn grew a pair of wings and flew into his hands. Then, he could've just waited at home…

"There must be certain restrictions…

"0-08 most likely doesn't possess direct combat ability. Otherwise, Ince Zangwill could've stormed through Chanis Gate in Tingen…

"As one of the most dangerous Sealed Artifacts, perhaps it can let people act according to its description without realizing it? That was the reason behind all the coincidences?

"If that's really true, then 0-08 is quite terrifying. Even Megose who was pregnant with the son of an evil god adhered to its arrangements… No wonder Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts are 'Extremely Dangerous.' They're of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. They're not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied…"

Klein stopped rapping the edge of the table. He divined his earlier guess, but, unfortunately, it failed due to a lack of information.

He saw that a few minutes had passed, and he planned to return to the real world as soon as possible. Hence, he didn't let his thoughts run wild but wrote down the penultimate divination statement.

"The city where Ince Zangwill currently is."

Due to the existence of Sealed Artifact 0-08 and the fact that Ince Zangwill had likely become a Demigod, Klein couldn't divine his exact location directly. He could only make a rough inquiry of the general area.

Of course, if there wasn't a mysterious space like the world above the gray fog to eliminate disturbances, he would definitely fail in divination, even if it was a rough inquiry.

He leaned against the high-back chair and recited the divination statement seven times. He dreamed again and entered the blurry world.

The blurry world suddenly cracked, and there was a wide river which was slightly murky.

There was a grand bridge above the river. Both banks had ports lined one after another. There were many goods and many workers.

To the northeast of the river, there were rows upon rows of houses. Most of them had the Loen Kingdom's present-day architectural styles, such as polygenic roofs, oriel windows, and no verandah by the street. Other than that, there was a lot of Gothic architecture.

The streets were filled with people and carriages. From time to time, strange machinery could be seen.

The farther east he went, the more chimneys there were and the smokier it got. When he headed west, the elevation rose, and there were houses in grayish-blue, beige, and light yellow that spiraled up opulent castles and Gothic clock towers.

Gong!

The chime of a clock sounded and snapped Klein back to his senses. He knew which city he had seen.

The "Land of Hope," and the "City of Cities," Backlund!

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CHAPTER 213
ANOTHER LOOK

So Ince Zangwill has gone to Backlund… I wonder how long he'll stay there… Yes… I should confirm this every now and then… Klein leaned forward as he thought. He erased the contents on the goatskin and wrote a new divination statement:

"Lanevus's current location."

From his point of view, the person that caused the Captain and him to nearly die was undoubtedly Ince Zangwill, but the lunatic Lanevus was definitely an accomplice who cannot shirk from the responsibility. He had to pay the price in blood!

After reciting the statement seven times, Klein once again entered the dream. But the scene that appeared after the foggy world shattered was the same as the one he had seen before!

A wide, slightly murky river, countless piers and buildings. The buildings were primarily in the present Loen architectural style, some a little more Gothic. There were crowded streets, flourishing sights, chimneys that continually spewed smoke. There were opulent castles standing tall with the trademark Gothic clock towers…

Lanevus was also in the "Land of Hope," the "City of Cities," Backlund!

Klein opened his eyes, a little confused. He had divined for Lanevus's specific location, but the results were still a very general, vague region.

This tells me that Lanevus's Sequence must be much higher than I imagined… No, it could also be that he's received a large benefit from helping the son of the True Creator descend upon this world. For example, a little godhood characteristics, or some object similar to the placenta left behind by Megose's baby? Hmm… The latter would most likely have been taken away by Ince Zangwill. Thoughts ran through Klein's mind as he muttered to himself whilst he made initial assumptions.

After confirming the rough area where both his enemies were, he thought about another problem. He still didn't have the ability to exact revenge!

Even if Lanevus is only a Sequence 7, or even 8, it wouldn't be easy to deal with him if he did indeed receive a large benefit. Lanevus is also obviously very crafty, he could outwit and defeat Beyonders more powerful than himself… Ince Zangwill is even more terrifying. He's a Sequence 4 Demigod, and he wields a powerful Grade 0 Sealed Artifact… Although there were some secrets surrounding my transmigration, it's clear that I can't convert those secrets into combat strength. It's likely that it's not possible for a very long period of time… The only means that I have are to continue raising my Sequence, or I could collect even more powerful mystical items. I have to use both the methods at the same time…

In between his thoughts, Klein decided to add another divination.

He deliberated on the statement before writing solemnly, "My opportunities of becoming powerful."

He gently placed the pen on the table and leaned back, then he closed his eyes.

He recited the statement silently and fell into a deep sleep with the help of Cogitation.

In the foggy world, he once again saw the scene that he had previously seen. The river, piers, chimneys, crowds, castles, various machinery, and

Gothic clock towers. He had once again seen the capital of the Loen Kingdom, Backlund!

Immediately following that, the scene changed. He saw a magnificent peak piercing through the clouds, and, on it, he saw a majestic, ancient palace. He saw the giant throne carved from stone, adorned with dull gems and gold. He saw a strange vertical pupil formed from countless mysterious symbols.

The scene shattered silently without warning. Klein slowly sat up and tapped on the edge of the table with his fingers.

Backlund contains the opportunities for me to become powerful…

Does the second scene refer to the main peak of the Hornacis mountain range, the treasures left behind by the Antigonus family? The strange vertical pupil formed by countless mysterious symbols which the Misfortune Cloth Puppet conveyed to me through the corruption from the Antigonus family's notebook is the key to beginning all of this…

Many thoughts flashed through his mind. Klein decided that he was in no rush to visit the Hornacis mountain range. Even a Sequence 4 Demigod might not be able to deal with the dangers that resided there.

I guess I'll head to Backlund first… Klein sighed and made a decision. He enveloped himself with spirituality and stimulated a descent, exiting the mysterious space above the gray fog.

When he returned to the material world, he slowly walked out of his hiding spot towards Dunn Smith's grave.

He stared deeply at the picture and epitaph. Klein slowly drew a crimson moon on his chest and walked out of the cemetery.

As a former Nighthawk, a Nighthawk who had to regularly patrol Raphael Cemetery, he was quite familiar with the routes of the guards, as well its

surroundings. He managed to leave the cemetery easily, without causing any alarm. He followed the gravel road into Tingen, using the shade of the trees as cover.

The night was peaceful and the moon was ever-so dreamy. Klein walked alone, his thoughts running wild and unbridled. He sometimes considered his plan for revenge, sometimes thinking back to the times he spent with the Captain, sometimes recalling Old Neil's hidden grief beneath his humorous facade…

Unknowingly, Klein had entered the nearest street like a wandering ghost, making his way past turn after turn.

It was two hours later when he freed himself from that state and regained complete control of his thoughts.

He realized that he was standing on Daffodil Street. Opposite him was the house he shared with his brother and sister.

Instinctively, Klein had returned here.

He took a step forward with clear joy, but suddenly paused. He let out a bitter smile and muttered with a self-deprecating tone, "If I went up and knocked on the door, Melissa might faint from shock… Benson would be so nervous his hair would start to drop. He would then try his best to calmly convince me, in the name of a curly-haired baboon…"

Shaking his head, Klein stared at the familiar door for a while before heading towards Iron Cross Street.

This is fine too, this is fine too… The things that I do in the future will not implicate them. The compensation given to them by the Nighthawks team and the police department will be enough for them to live a stable middle-class life, even if Melissa fails to find a job and Benson loses his job…

Klein walked silently for a moment before starting to feel fatigue. But, as someone who was "dead," he didn't have any other belongings on him except for the clothes he was wearing, his topaz pendulum, and Azik's copper whistle. He didn't have pounds, nor soli, nor pennies.

Should I give the whistle a blow to send a letter to Mr. Azik and get him to help me? Klein laughed optimistically. Forget it, I shouldn't contact him for the time being. Perhaps Ince Zangwill is still keeping him under surveillance. I'll look for him when the time is right… To an old monster who has lived countless lives for thousands of year, he should be able to understand resurrection… At least it's not too cold tonight. I'll make do by finding a place to sleep for the time being and head to the Tingen branch of the Backlund Bank tomorrow morning to retrieve the money in the anonymous account.

As there had been too many things to do lately. Klein hadn't had the time to start on the experiments involving the sacrificial ritual. He hadn't touched the 300 pounds in the anonymous account either.

That should be enough to support my expenses for quite a while. I'll buy a newspaper tomorrow to confirm what day it is… Miss Justice and the others didn't make any new prayers, which means that I didn't miss a gathering… Klein thought as he found a spot that had no wind. He sat down and took off his jacket. He used it as a blanket and leaned on the wall to sleep.

It wasn't long into his sleep when he was suddenly woken by someone. He saw a policeman wielding a baton.

He only had a single chevron on his epaulet, the lowest-ranking police constable… Klein glanced at him to ascertain his identity.

The policeman said fiercely, "You can't sleep here!

"The streets and parks aren't for you lazy, jobless vagrants to sleep in!

"Those are the terms in the Poor Law!"

Is that so? Klein froze. Given his sensitive identity, he didn't argue with the policeman.

He grabbed his jacket and continued walking until daybreak.

Soon after, he lowered his head and entered the Tingen branch of the Backlund Bank. He took out 200 pounds with the password he had set, leaving behind a third of the money as "savings," in case of any emergencies.

Without a doubt, Klein heard "prayers" when he wrote the password in ancient Hermes.

Klein then spent 38 pounds on two sets of formal wear, two shirts, two trousers, two pairs of leather boots, two bow ties, four pairs of socks, as well as two thick double-breasted jackets, two solid colored fur coats, and two pairs of thick trousers in preparation for the winter. He also bought a cane, a wallet, and a leather luggage bag.

After completing his purchase, Klein found a hotel to wash up and change in. He rented a private carriage directly to the train station in Tingen in order to avoid meeting anyone familiar. Along the way, he purchased a newspaper and discovered that it was Sunday.

It took about four hours to get from Tingen to Backlund by train. A luxurious first-class seat cost about three-quarters of a pound, or 15 soli. A second-class seat cost 10 soli, or half a pound.

The packed, poorly-maintained third-class seats were rather cheap at only 5 soli.

Klein thought for a moment before buying a seat for the two o'clock train, a second-class seat.

Klein found a random spot to sit in the waiting area with his ticket and luggage in hand. It was only slightly after nine in the morning.

He was happy that the Loen Kingdom didn't have a strict census. He could prove his identity just by using the water and gas bills, as well as his rent for the past three months. Purchasing a train ticket was even easier, as all he needed was money.

Klein suddenly had an empty feeling in his heart as he was sitting there, thinking about how he was about to leave for Backlund from Tingen in the afternoon.

He thought about his sister who always gave him a motherly vibe. He thought about his brother who liked to crack cold jokes. He thought about how they would fill their stomachs up so much that they wouldn't feel like moving…

Recalling these scenes, Klein suddenly laughed. He laughed bitterly, for he thought about the tortoise that Melissa called a "puppet," as well as Benson's pitiful hairline.

He suddenly had a strong urge. He wanted to see his siblings again.

At this moment, Klein suddenly realized why he hadn't picked an earlier train but instead bought a ticket for the two o'clock train.

He carried his luggage and left the waiting area quickly, taking a rented carriage back to Daffodil Street.

He then hid in a shady area on the opposite side and looked at the door to his house. There were many times when he felt like heading over, but he couldn't bring himself to cross the wide street.

Klein looked across the road in a daze, suddenly having a feeling of homelessness. He'd had a similar feeling when he had just transmigrated.

Suddenly, he saw the door to the house open as Melissa and Benson came out.

Melissa was wearing a black dress and black veiled hat. Benson was in a shirt, vest, trousers, coat, and hat, all in black. They both had numb, sullen expressions.

Melissa has become skinnier… Why is Benson so haggard… Klein's heart winced in pain. He opened his mouth but couldn't shout out their names.

Without realizing it, he followed Benson and Melissa to the nearest municipal square. He saw that tents had been erected there again. A new circus troupe was in town for a performance.

Benson took out some money and purchased the entrance tickets and led Melissa into the circus. He forced a smile.

"This circus troupe is very famous."

Melissa nodded without expression.

"Okay."

Suddenly, she slipped and almost fell.

Klein, who was also buying a ticket, opened his mouth. He wanted to help his sister, but he could only retract the hand he had instinctively extended and stood helplessly in the busy crowd.

Benson jumped in fright, but he was too late to help. However, Melissa quickly steadied herself. She puckered her lips and said nothing.

At this moment, clowns swarmed forward, some performing balancing acts on wheels or large rubber balls, others tossing countless tennis balls into the air, then ridiculously catching every one of them.

Melissa seemed to disregard the clowns as she looked at the performance. Benson tried to lift his sister's spirits by cheering, but he didn't succeed. He slowly turned sullen too.

Klein puckered his lips tightly as he watched this scene from afar. He wanted to approach them, but he didn't dare to.

Suddenly, he touched the wallet in his jacket and had an idea.

Benson and Melissa continued walking forward, silently watching the various performances.

Some time later, they saw a clown running towards them. His face was painted in colorful pastels. At first, he threw a tennis ball into the air, and, while the attention of the surrounding people was drawn to the air, he conjured a flower out of thin air. It was a Seville Chrysanthemum.

The clown brought the flower before Melissa and Benson. The flower was golden in color and symbolized happiness.

Melissa and Benson looked at the clown in a daze. All they saw was a wide smile plastered over the pastel face. It was a happy smile, an exaggerated smile, a ridiculous smile.

(End of Volume 2)

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CHAPTER 214
LAND OF HOPE

Choo-choo!

A train whistle resounded in every corner of the station as a metal behemoth, in the form of a steam locomotive, came to a slow stop with more than twenty carriages in tow.

Dressed in a tuxedo and half top hat, Klein was carrying an exaggerated luggage bag that appeared incongruent with his figure. He took a firm step onto the ground of the Loen Kingdom's capital, Backlund.

This city was divided into two regions by the Tussock River which flowed to the southeast. The two lands were connected by the Backlund Bridge and ferries, with a population exceeding five million people. It was the most prosperous capital in the Southern and Northern Continents.

Klein looked far into the distance and saw faint yellow hazes everywhere. Visibility was terrible, and the gas lamps hanging above the train platform were already lit to dispel the gloominess and darkness.

It's only half past six? It looks like it's nine or ten… Klein shook his head indiscernibly. Suddenly, he recalled a joke he read on the Tussock Times.

A gentleman who just arrived in Backlund finds himself lost in the thick haze. Helpless, he asks a drenched gentleman passing him by, "How do you get to the Tussock River?" The gentleman answers him in a friendly manner, "Walk straight without stopping. I just swam from there 1."

Every time I read Backlund newspapers or magazines, the reporters and editors will make a mockery of the polluted air or the increasing number of foggy days in every conceivable way possible… Previously, the Backlund Daily Tribune even did the statistics, and it was found that it has gone from about 60 days a year from thirty years ago to the present 75 days a year… For this, many farsighted people established organizations like the Soot Reduction Association, Smoke Reduction Association… Apparently, there was a bill in September that motioned the need to establish the National Atmospheric Pollution Council… Klein lowered his huge luggage bag and pinched his nose to gain respite from the sudden discomfort.

Then, tracing his golden chain, he fished out a golden pocket watch from his vest pocket. He popped it open and looked at the time.

When he truly bade farewell to his siblings, he had especially visited a department store and spent 4 pounds 10 soli to buy a golden pocket watch and matched it with a golden chain worth 1 pound 5 soli.

To not constantly be aware of the exact time made him feel a sense of horror.

Klein had planned on buying a silver pocket watch as he felt it matched his temperament. But after considering the true essence of a Clown, he finally chose a more showy and exaggerated golden watch.

6:39… It's not that much later… Klein put away his pocket watch and held his cane and luggage bag as he slowly walked out the steam locomotive station with the crowd.

Suddenly, he made a sudden turn, causing a person who was secretly tailing him to have his hand fall empty when reaching for his pocket.

Klein was unfazed by this episode as he followed the cement-paved road and mixed into the crowd, arriving at an intersection in front of him.

There was a lawn and garden that circled around a column that resembled a chimney.

No, it's very likely a chimney… Klein saw the column spewing thick smoke from its top end.

A portion of the smoke floated high into the sky as a portion condensed into tiny liquid droplets that scattered everywhere.

Klein paused once again and placed his luggage down. He spread open the newspaper and map that he had held onto using his other hand.

While on the steam locomotive, he had already planned where he was going to go or what to do next.

The experiences that he had undergone, and the mental experience that he had, when disguised as a clown in the morning, made Klein finally understand the true essence of a Clown—"Although being capable of knowing a little about fate, one remains helpless towards fate; therefore, one might as well use a smiling face to hide all the pain, sorrow, confusion, and depression."

At that moment, he clearly felt the Clown potion "digest" and believed that if he continued "acting" this way, it wouldn't take long for him to make another attempt at advancing.

But herein lay the problem—he didn't know the corresponding name of the Sequence 7 potion, much less know its exact formula.

How should I obtain the formula? The Secret Order seldom appears. They only seem to be interested in the Antigonus family's items… This is also why others have little understanding of them. Yes… I should consider two aspects. One, I need to come into contact with the local Beyonder circles and see if I can find clues. Two, I should set a trap and use the Antigonus family's treasure as bait to lure the Secret Order out. After all, I do possess

knowledge of the strange vertical pupil formed from the numerous mysterious symbols.

But that's too risky. I need to be careful since the bait cannot be too good or too bad. It won't garner their interest if it's too bad, and if it's too good, I might end up attracting a shark, a shark that can swallow me whole… The Secret Order's leader, Zaratul, is a figure who guided Emperor Roselle. Maybe he had obtained the biggest slice of the pie during that revolutionary feast… Of course, he might not still be alive as that was something from two hundred years ago…

Amidst his thoughts, Klein felt the coldness of Backlund and couldn't help but shiver. He decided to find a residence as soon as possible.

He flipped through the papers and, once again, browsed through the rental section and saw a circled advertisement.

15 Minsk Street, Cherwood Borough… terrace house… Weekly rent of 18 soli…

Klein had thought this through very carefully about the area in which he was to stay in. Although Backlund had a population exceeding five million people, he still needed to be wary about meeting the local Nighthawks. Be it the newly transferred Daly or Lorotta, Aiur Harson, and Borgia that he previously met, they would definitely be able to recognize him.

Therefore, Klein eliminated the North Borough where the Church of the Evernight Goddess's Backlund diocese's headquarters and Saint Samuel Cathedral, was. He also eliminated areas with the best security and the extremely strictly monitored Empress Borough and Western Borough. These two boroughs belonged to the nobles and the richest magnates, with more of the nobles living closer to Empress Borough.

After eliminating the worker areas, the harbor, and the East Borough and Backlund Bridge region where the poor gathered, Klein had few choices left. The first choice was Hillston Backlund where the Backlund Stock

Exchange, Clearing House, Futures Center, the seven major banks' headquarters, various Trust Funds, rail companies, and bulk cargo commerce companies were. It was known as the financial, business, and economic center of the Loen Kingdom. The second choice was Cherwood Borough where there were many small companies and residential buildings.

The two boroughs had a lot of people in them, and the security was relatively good. It was good for hiding in. After serious consideration, Klein chose the cheaper Cherwood Borough.

The reason why he didn't seek out organizations like the Capital Housing Improvement Company or Capital Housing Improvement Association was due to the fact that they needed identification which he couldn't produce at the moment.

If I can't find a place to rent today, I'll find a motel that doesn't need any identification to stay for the night… Klein gathered the things in his hand and carried his luggage. According to the map, he walked towards what seemed like a department store's entrance.

That was the Backlund Metro's entrance.

Yes, a metro!

The first time Klein saw the word "metro" on the newspapers and magazines, he nearly jumped in fright. He never expected that such a transportation vehicle had become a reality in this era which hadn't entered the age of electricity.

It was born twenty-five years ago. It first connected both banks of the Tussock River and had now expanded to the key city boroughs. Of course, there weren't many stations.

Through the main door, Klein followed the people ahead of him as he walked to the ticketing booth.

After being in line for a few minutes, he finally saw a cashier with a head with beautiful golden hair.

The lady didn't raise her head. All she did was point at the wooden board by the side of the window with the prices.

Peak period (7am-9am, 6pm-8pm): 10-minute headway.

15-minute headway for all other times.

First-class seat: 6 pence

Second-class seat: 4 pence

Third-class seat: 3 pence.

Return trips are respectively: 9, 6, 5 pence.

Annual Pass

First-class: 8 pounds

Second-class: 5 pounds 10 soli

Third-class: No Annual Pass

It's cheaper than I imagined… There's actually no distance restriction… Melissa would definitely love this more than a horse carriage. This is the culmination of machinery… Klein thought as he suddenly felt upset.

He revealed a brilliant smile and fished out 4 pence and handed it to the cashier.

"Second-class seat."

Smack! The cashier tore a ticket and stamped it before handing it to Klein.

After finding the line that led to Cherwood Borough and passing through the not-very-strict security checks, Klein went down the flight of stairs and quickly came to the platform. He followed the labels on the ground and found the corresponding location for second-class seats.

Choo-choo!

He didn't wait long before he heard the chugging sound of the train and the thunderous steam whistle. He saw a huge steam locomotive

Its large and meandering body, together with its black metallic luster and complex machinery, mixed together to form a unique beauty.

Backlund's metro still used steam locomotives. The smoke that they spewed was specially designed to enter a pipe above and travel through a chimney, out into the world.

This was also the true usage for the lawn and garden out on the streets.

Amidst the screeching sound of metal, Klein first waited for the passengers to alight before carrying his cane and luggage over slowly. He then allowed the conductor to check his tickets.

Unlike the third-class seats, the second-class seats were one person to a seat, so there were no concerns about having one's seat snatched. Just as Klein sat down, stowed away his luggage, and leaned on his cane, he suddenly heard hurried footsteps.

He subconsciously looked towards the door and saw a thin, adolescent boy rush into the carriage.

The boy was wearing a coat that didn't suit his age. He wore a rounded top hat and carried a ragged haversack. He kept his head very low.

"I'm sorry. I got on the wrong carriage. I'm from third-class…" He showed his ticket and apologized to the passengers before briskly walking towards

the third-class carriage.

Klein retracted his gaze and once again confirmed his destination as he waited for the doors to the carriage to close.

At that moment, he heard chaotic and hurried footsteps. He then saw a few men dressed in black coats and half top hats rush into the carriage.

Are they chasing after that fifteen-year-old boy? Klein instinctively had such a thought.

He shook his head gently and continued reading his newspapers and map, just like the other passengers onboard the carriage.

Footnotes:

Ch 214 Footnote 1

Joke adapted from English magazine 'Punch'

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CHAPTER 215
MRS. SAMMER

"Did you see a teenage boy? He's wearing an old coat!" One of the men who dashed into the carriage asked the conductor fiercely.

Klein glanced at the man through the corner of his eyes. He was thin and hardy; his skin a dark shade from prolonged exposure to the sun. His eyes were much more recessed than the typical Loen Kingdom citizen.

A highlander? Or a mixed blood? He nodded thoughtfully.

In the middle of the Northern Continent, the point where the Hornacis mountain range began, there was a highland which was extremely hot and dry. Most of it belonged under the Feynapotter Kingdom, while the area west belonged to the Intis Republic. The area to the east belonged to the Loen Kingdom. Its natives were thin and barbarians, but they were brave and skillful in warfare. A long time ago, they posed as one of the biggest problems for the three nations. But with the advancement of gunpowder, and the changes in the way war was carried out, these highlanders eventually recognized reality and submitted.

A large number of them left the highlands and entered Backlund, Trier, Feynapotter City, and the various flourishing cities or ports in the Northern Continent. Some were workers, while others became grunts of the local triads. They dared to kill and showed no fear of thorny situations.

The conductor was a man in his twenties. He shrank back when he heard that as he pointed in the direction of the third-class carriage.

"I saw him… He went that way."

The leader, wearing a black coat and half top hat, nodded indiscernibly. He led his men and rushed to the third-class carriage and showed no concern towards the surrounding passengers.

*If I were that boy, I would've already alighted from the third-class carriage… *As Klein read his newspaper, he began letting his thoughts stray.

About a minute later, the train whistled as the carriage doors closed.

Chug! Chug! The steam metro began speeding up as it cruised along. But at that moment, Klein suddenly sensed something as he looked up to see the door leading to the other second-class carriages.

The teenage boy walked slowly into the carriage wearing his old coat and round top hat while carrying a ragged haversack.

He looked adolescent and had refined facial features. His red eyes were staid and solemn.

…Impressive. He alighted from the third-class carriage and circled around to enter from the first-class carriage again? Was he afraid that his pursuers had partners waiting inside the metro station? Klein was slightly surprised. He felt that the boy's handling of the situation was rather mature and careful. He was much better than most people in their twenties.

He clicked this left molar lightly and secretly activated his Spirit Vision. He scanned the boy and saw that he was in a state of fatigue. His emotions were tense and he was dispirited. However, he still maintained a blueness that represented calm thinking.

*Impressive… at his age… *Klein mumbled silently as he lowered his head and continued reading his papers.

The boy didn't notice that he had been scrutinized by a Beyonder as he headed for the third-class carriage once again.

The rest of the journey happened stably and calmly. Klein arrived twenty minutes later at one of the three train stations in Cherwood Borough.

He took a rented carriage for nearly ten minutes before finding Minsk Street. According to the descriptions in the papers, he came to Unit 17 which was next to Unit 15 and pulled the doorbell.

Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

As sounds reverberated inside the house, a mechanical bird that didn't look too fancy popped out from above the door. It was about the size of a palm and was made up of gears and other parts. It constantly nodded its head and let out the sound of a cuckoo bird.

Not a bad toy. It's just not very well-crafted… Klein made an objective assessment.

Nearly twenty seconds later, the dark door was pulled open. A young maidservant dressed in white and black looked warily at Klein and asked, "May I help you?"

Klein smiled and waved his cane which was now wrapped with the newspapers.

"I'm here to find Mrs. Sammer about renting a house. I'm guessing it hasn't been rented out?"

The full name on the newspaper was Stelyn Sammer.

"Not at all. Please wait a moment." The maidservant bent her back politely.

She rushed inside and reported to her mistress. Moments later, she came out again and ushered him in. She then helped him place his cane and luggage in the foyer and hung his coat and hat on a clothes rack in the same place.

A warm blast of air inundated him, dispersing the chill Klein had brought in. He scanned the area and first saw a uniquely designed fireplace. He saw pieces of red, smokeless charcoal burning inside.

Sammer's living room was rather big. It was nearly equivalent to the entire Moretti's first floor in area. Certain areas were decorated with carpets or oil paintings of beautiful sceneries.

The maidservant brought Klein to the sofa and said to her mistress in a pale yellow dress, "Madam, the guest is here."

The mistress was in her thirties. She had blonde hair and blue eyes. She looked rather pretty and had preserved her youthfulness well. She held a silver-inlaid feathered royal fan in her hand.

As she was at home, and the fireplace made for a warm environment, she didn't wear anything around her neck, revealing her white bosom and shiny long neck.

"Hello there, Mrs. Sammer." Klein pressed one palm to his chest and bowed.

Mrs. Sammer smiled in a reserved manner.

"Good evening. Please, have a seat. Do you wish for some coffee or tea?"

Klein sat on the sofa and answered frankly, "Tea, please."

"Julianne, Marquis Black Tea," Instructed Mrs. Sammer. She then turned her eyes to Klein and asked, "How might I address you?"

"Sherlock Moriarty. You can call me Sherlock." Klein had long thought of a fake name.

At that moment, he caught a whiff of a fragrance from the kitchen and saw complicated pipes.

"Heh, heh, those are my husband's designs. Although his actual job is a manager at the Coim Company, he's a machinery enthusiast. He's also a member of the Kingdom's Soot Reduction Association." Mrs. Sammer noticed Klein's gaze and explained with a smile.

*Mrs, there's no need to go into such detail. I'm not here on a blind date with your husband… *Klein lampooned as he said without his smile waning, "Mrs. Sammer, I wish to rent the Unit 15."

Mrs. Sammer straightened her back as she sat elegantly. She said with a smile, "I have to remind you of certain things. Unit 15 doesn't have such pipes, reclining chairs, card tables, mahogany kitchen cabinets, fine porcelain, silver cutlery, gold-plated tea sets, or removable carpets…”

She pointed at the things in her house as she introduced them, one after another. After she was done, she added,

"It originally belonged to my elder sister and brother-in-law, but due to a business failure, my brother-in-law had no choice but to move to the Southern Continent. They have a plantation at Balam. However, I don't agree with their choice. This is just too unfair for my niece and nephew. There are no good grammar schools there; not even a good home tutor."

Mrs, that's not something I would like to know… Klein nodded sincerely and said, "Apart from the weather, there's no place in the Southern Continent that can compare with Backlund."

His agreement satisfied Mrs. Sammer greatly as her eyes darted slightly.

"This house still has a three years lease. I wish for you to pay a year's rent at once. 18 soli a week. The use of the furniture will cost 1 soli. I can collect a deposit of 50 pounds."

Klein shook his head and smiled.

"Mrs. Sammer, you should be able to tell that I just arrived in Backlund. I don't know what will happen to me in time. To pay 50 pounds for a deposit will lower my ability to resist any risks. My limit is half a year. 25 pounds."

He still planned on renting another one-bedroom apartment in Backlund's East Borough. He would use it to change his clothes, undergo disguises, and shirk off any tailing. It was necessary for what he planned to do.

Stelyn Stelyn nodded slightly and asked, "Have you studied at grammar school?"

Klein chuckled and said, "Yes, I later self-studied history."

"Do you have any identification with you?" asked Stelyn casually.

"I'm sorry. I was in a hurry when I left home and forgot to bring it with me. Heh, heh, I forgot to introduce myself. I'm from Midseashire." Klein deliberately used the accent his classmate, Welch, often used.

When he said "forgot," it reminded him of Captain Dunn Smith. The smile on his face turned even more brilliant.

At this moment, the maidservant, Julianne, brought a cup of black tea over. The cup was porcelain-white with classic flowery patterns. Some areas were plated in gold.

Klein took a sip and found the fragrance distant. The mix of sourness and sweetness were perfect, and it was clearly much better than the Sibe black tea he often drank.

"Very authentic Marquis Black Tea." He complimented with a description which couldn't be faulted.

Mrs. Stelyn Sammer curled her lips and said, "Then, let's do half a year's rent. 25 pounds."

Klein thanked her and engaged in a few minutes of idle chatter with her until another maidservant found a service contract from the study.

After both parties signed the contract, Klein counted 25 pounds while feeling the pinch and pushed it to Mrs. Sammer.

Stelyn counted it silently before smiling.

"Mr. Moriarty, I believe you'll be finding a job in Backlund?"

"Yes," Klein answered, feeling a little lost.

The corners of Stelyn's mouth hooked up.

"I can give you some suggestions. With a weekly salary lower than 3 pounds, it would be difficult for you to live in Cherwood Borough. Your rent, food expenses, water, gas, and charcoal expenses, transport expenses, and everything else added up will cost at least 2 pounds 5 soli. Believe me, this is Backlund. One still has to consider new clothes and good cutlery and tea sets… A weekly salary of 3 pounds is the bare minimum.

"If your weekly salary reaches 5 pounds, you can hire a maidservant. At 6 pounds, you can consider hiring a chef. At 7 pounds, you can add a male servant. For 8 pounds, you can hire an additional maidservant…"

Mrs. Sammer, I think you are flaunting your wealth… I once earned more than 10 pounds a week… Klein maintained his smile as he listened attentively.

At that moment, the door suddenly opened. A stout man walked in, he was dressed in a black double-breasted suit and leather gloves of the same color. Above his lips were two elegant mustaches.

"Luke, this is Mr. Moriarty. He will be our neighbor," Stelyn Sammer went forward and introduced him.

Obviously the master of the house, Luke took off his coat and handed it to the male servant beside him. He smiled politely and said, "Mr. Moriarty, would you like to join us for dinner?"

*This is the manager of some Coim Company, a member of the Loen Kingdom's Soot Reduction Association… *Klein said with a smile, "I'm very sorry, Mr. Sammer. I've eaten on the steam locomotive; although, that taste does leave a deep impression on one."

After exchanging some pleasantries, Klein was led by Julianne out of the house and into the neighboring Unit 15.

The layout was very similar to the unit next door. The first floor had a huge living room, a dining room with decent lighting, two guest rooms, a bathroom, a cellar, a kitchen that extended all the way back. On the second floor, there were four bedrooms, an activity room, a solarium, a study, two bedrooms, and a huge balcony.

"Mrs. Sammer wishes to tell you that you can rent out part of it, but not to workers or make this place too packed or noisy. Oh… I'll bring you clean blankets, sheets, and pillow cases in a while." Julianne returned to the Sammers after informing Klein.

After doing a round of packing, Klein finally settled into Backlund.

He sat in an empty living room and suddenly felt lonely. Hence, he forced himself to consider his future plans.

Whether he liked it or not, revenge and advancement couldn't be done in the blink of an eye. Therefore, he had to obtain a lucrative job to prevent himself from facing any financial problems.

However, the job couldn't restrict him and affect his movements and plans. In other words, he needed sufficient freedom.

After some deliberation and eliminating unsuitable jobs, Klein was left with three choices.

He could become an author by becoming a plagiarist. However, his identity was sensitive, so the more famous he became, the more trouble it meant. All he could do was give up unwillingly.

The second choice was to be a news reporter. This was considered quite a decent job in this time and age. However, job applications required his educational certificates and other documents. Klein was helpless in that respect.

Finally, he chose the third job.

Private detective!

This was also the reason why he had taken on a fake name.

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CHAPTER 216
THE SAME-OLD GATHERING

Klein started his first morning in Backlund under cold and humid weather conditions, with a light fog that provided very little visibility. For breakfast, he had one liter worth of cheap tea, costing one penny, and two pieces of toast with inferior butter in the center.

He was busy the entire morning, but he first went to the Cherwood Borough's Backlund Bulletin to post a tiny advertisement for a month at the cost of thirty pounds.

From Tuesday, the Backlund Bulletin's loyal readers would see a tiny advertisement along the seams of its seventh and eighth page.

Sherlock Moriarty. Good at various types of private investigations. Reasonable prices and strictly adheres to the principles of confidentiality. Resides at Cherwood Borough's 15 Minsk Street.

The reason why Klein didn't choose major newspapers like the Tussock Times or the Backlund Daily Tribune, that had a readership all across the entirety of the Loen Kingdom, was due to the fact that his business was temporarily limited to Backlund. Furthermore, he didn't wish for a sterling reputation.

Therefore, the Backlund Bulletin, which was well-received locally and had low advertisement fees, became his first choice.

After leaving the Backlund Bulletin's headquarters, Klein took out a map and followed it to purchase various herb powders and silver slices from various herbal stores, flower stores, jewelry stores, and accessory stores. He

did it in preparation for holding a ritual. When items that didn't have any spirituality were involved, most of the materials in mysticism could be purchased from ordinary stores. However, they weren't all under one roof, requiring him to visit many stores to collect them.

To do so, Klein spent another 5 pounds. The humongous sum of 200 pounds that he withdrew broke below the 100 pound mark, leaving him only with 92 pounds.

"Spending money is as easy as drinking water…" Klein found a small cafeteria nearby and ordered a black pepper steak worth 8 pence.

He returned to 15 Minsk Street at one in the afternoon, and without rest, he spent his time using Slumber flower, dragon blood grass, dark red sandalwood, and mint powders to create Holy Night Powder, a key ingredient needed to create a wall of spirituality.

He could only make do with this method until he bought a real silver ritual dagger.

Klein speculated that he would have to advance to Sequence 7 before he could do away with this restriction.

Phew, Miss Justice, Mr. Hanged Man, and The Sun haven't requested for leave yet. The gathering will be held on time today… I wonder what surprises Mr. Hanged Man will bring me, and how many pages of Roselle's diary he can provide… Klein laid back on his bed in the bedroom and thought about all sorts of things.

To him, a private detective was a career that took into account both money and action. It allowed him to get in touch with people from all walks of life and slowly discover the Beyonder circle in Backlund. From there, he could slowly find clues regarding the Secret Order.

Of course, if he was lucky, he would even be able to figure out the Sequence 7 which corresponded to the Clown through a particular circle of

Beyonders and buy the corresponding potion formula and main ingredients.

As for Ince Zangwill's whereabouts, Klein temporarily chose not to take the initiative to seek him out. He might even avoid him a little. However, if he were to accidentally discover this enemy of his, without exposing himself, he wouldn't mind doing a good deed and sending an anonymous letter to the Church of the Evernight Goddess.

*A private detective's income can, at most, support a middle-class standard of living. If I want enough money to buy the potion formula and Beyonder materials, It will either depend on Miss Justice, or it will be through investments with the remaining 100 pounds that I have left in my anonymous account… Yes, I can't touch the 92 pounds that I have for the time being. Perhaps, I wouldn't be having any income for some time… *With this in mind, Klein suddenly sat up. He came to the first floor and began reading the various newspapers he bought in passing.

These newspapers often carried news about what had been invented and required investments, or how someone wished to form a joint venture with others to do a particular business.

Klein relied on his knowledge from Earth and his understanding of this era to carefully sift through the projects. Unfortunately, none of the ones on the papers today were reliable.

At fifteen minutes to three, he returned to his bedroom, locked the door, drew the curtains, and used Holy Night Powder to create a wall of spirituality.

Klein took four steps counterclockwise and arrived above the gray fog. He sat in the high-back chair belonging to The Fool before extending his spirituality and touching the crimson star that symbolized The Sun as if he was responding to a prayer.

This is one of the few things in my new life that hasn't changed… he suddenly sighed.

…

In an area outside of the City of Silver, in a grayish-black tower that was half-collapsed.

Nine members of a patrol squad were gathered around a blazing bonfire, chatting about their experiences in the past few days.

There were also a few other team members guarding the perimeter, prepared for any possible attacks that might break out from the darkness.

Many of the City of Silver's Beyonders had used their blood to teach them a lesson:

"At all times, never let your guard down. The monsters in the darkness could very well be right behind you!"

On a night when the frequency of lightning was very low, it was necessary to keep the flames burning and the light shining. Once they were completely enveloped in darkness, it wasn't impossible for them to all disappear—no one could say for sure just what terrible things would happen in total darkness, because reality had broken the limits of their imagination time and time again.

Derrick Berg remained reserved and silent as he quietly listened to his companions reminiscing about the monster they had encountered before. It was a humanoid monster with eyes covering its entire body.

In order to finish off the monster, their patrolling team suffered a heavy price with five injured, and two of them severely injured.

Suddenly, Derrick's vision blurred, and he felt himself being enveloped in a thick gray mist.

In an inexplicably faraway place, in the depths of the gray fog, a blurry figure sat on an ancient high-back chair, looking down at him.

"Prepare for the gathering."

The Fool's voice echoed in Derrick's ears, but none of his teammates were aware of it.

After withdrawing his gaze and observing the area for more than ten seconds, Derrick moved to the very edge of the fire, leaned against the broken wall, and pretended to be asleep.

Ever since he found out that the members of the six-member council and Elder Lovia were unable to discover the existence of Mr. Fool, he gradually believed that as long as he didn't carelessly reveal any clues, he would be able to quietly attend the Tarot Club's gathering above the gray fog even under the gaze of others.

…

Backlund, Empress Borough.

Using the excuse that she was tired, Audrey returned to her bedroom.

She curbed her excitement and didn't pace back and forth; instead, she sat quietly on the bed, waiting for Mr. Fool's summoning.

*Father was busy communicating with the other Members of Parliament about the proposed bill, and the Beyonder guard isn't tailing me constantly. Thank you Goddess; my life has finally returned to normal! Two weeks have passed, Mr. Hanged Man must've prepared the pituitary gland of a mature Rainbow Salamander… I'm about to advance to Sequence 8! *Audrey thought with sparkling eyes.

To her, this was even more exciting and worth looking forward to than the thirty thousand pound bounty and the large plantation worth at least 8,000 pounds!

Finally, she saw the familiar illusory crimson surge towards her like a tidal wave, drowning her.

…

On an ancient-looking sailboat.

Alger Wilson locked the door to the captain's cabin and sat behind a sextant and the ship logs. He kept memorizing the contents of the thick stack of sheets in front of him.

After the investigations, he left the bustle of Backlund without any qualms after being rewarded by the upper echelons and returned to the sea, carrying a batch of secretly copied Roselle diary pages.

After digesting the Seafarer potion, I'll be able to advance normally. My contributions are enough for me to trade for the formula and ingredients… However, this will expose the fact that I know the "acting method." There are advantages and disadvantages… Alger shook his head, suddenly distracted.

At that moment, he felt the summoning of The Fool. His mind suddenly recalled the face of Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos whose flesh and blood quickly rotted as pieces of his face peeled off.

Alger instinctively lowered his head, allowing the crimson tide to engulf him.

…

Above the gray fog, inside the palace that looked like a giant's residence.

Having activated his Spirit Vision, Klein examined Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun to confirm their current states.

Audrey was about to happily greet everyone when she suddenly saw The Hanged Man gesturing to her before rushing to speak before her.

"Mr. Fool, I've obtained nineteen pages of Roselle's diary this time.

"Here, I must thank you for sending your adorer to help me get rid of Qilangos. These diary pages will be the compensation I should pay!"

*19 pages? Not bad… *Klein didn't talk much about the adorer as he smiled faintly.

"That is the principle of equivalent exchange."

As expected of Mr. Fool… A Pirate Admiral with a mystical item was nothing to "Him"…From the looks of it, I don't have to mention my claiming of the bounty… I wonder how many High-Sequence Beyonders Mr. Fool has as "His" adorers… Audrey had begun to use the word "He," "Him," or "His" to refer to The Fool without realizing it.

Upon hearing The Fool's answer, Alger said humbly, "The limit of my current memory is six pages. Please allow me to give them to you over separate occasions."

"No problem." Klein, who was surrounded by thick gray fog, nodded gently.

The Sun Derrick looked at the pages that appeared before The Hanged Man and was very curious about the contents of the diary.

With his previous experiences, he believed that the items that Mr. Fool was interested in definitely contained many mysteries.

He looked at Miss Justice and when he saw that she didn't have the impulse to ask, he cautiously maintained his silence.

Soon, the six pages of the diary were complete and came into Klein's hands.

Audrey and the others began to wait quietly. They were already used to such things.

Klein looked down and read the first page:

"16th December. I managed to contact the pathetic fellow who's trapped in the storm and was lost in the darkness."

Finally, there's a follow-up to one of the previous pages of the diary… Klein was delighted, and he became more focused:

"He called himself Mr. Door and tried to teach me a complicated and difficult ritual. He wanted me to help him return to the real world and promised to fulfill three of my requests.

"Does he think I'm stupid? I've lived for more than sixty years over my two lives. Does he think I can't tell that this is the usual manipulation done by evil gods and devils?

"But the history of the Fourth Epoch that he described was truly interesting."

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CHAPTER 217
MR. DOOR'S DESCRIPTION

Mr. Door… This naming style is very similar to mine… I wonder what was the real name of this pathetic fellow who was lost and trapped in the deep darkness amidst the storms is, and what his Sequence is. Or rather, just as Emperor Roselle had guessed, he's one of the evil gods or devils… Klein let out a silent chuckle which was mixed with ridicule and self-deprecating humor. He was also interested in the history of the Fourth Epoch.

"I know of the most famous 'War of the Four Emperors' in the Fourth Epoch, but the specific details and the main figures involved are limited to the information spread by the major Churches. For example, the 'Dark Emperor' of the Solomon Empire.

"It wasn't until today that this so-called Mr. Door finally answered my questions by letting me know who the remaining three emperors are. The half-insane Blood Emperor of the Tudor Dynasty, the Night Emperor of the Trunsoest Empire, and the Emperor of the Underworld of the Southern Continent, also known as Death.

"According to Mr. Door's description, in this war that changed the situation of the entire world, the Dark Emperor, Blood Emperor and Night Emperor fell one after another. The Emperor of the Underworld reaped the greatest benefits.

"Having said that, Mr. Door added with profound significance that after over a century of 'digestion,' Death went mad, but he also became stronger. Therefore, Death teamed up with the Primordial Demoness and brought about a Pale Disaster for the Northern Continent. Of course, this isn't

something he witnessed personally, but rather something that he hears when he comes close to the real world every month.

"Death went mad, but also became stronger!

"Even deities can go mad?

"What a horrifying sentence!

"However, this also confirms my guess. Before the Fifth Epoch, those deities would often descend into the real world, directly interfering with the situation in the Northern and Southern Continents. They might even personally appear just like Death.

"I asked Mr. Door if he had participated in the 'War of the Four Emperors'? If so, what role did he play? And what was the position the seven deities maintained in this war? What role did they play?

"Mr. Door didn't answer my question. He only said in a teasing manner that the number of pre-eminent mighty figures in the Fourth Epoch far exceeds my imagination.

"In addition, he also mentioned two laws, one is the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, and the other is the Law of Similar Sequence Beyonder Characteristics Conservation, which is consistent with certain things that I have learned from that most secret and ancient organization, and also from some of the phenomena I have observed. Heh, this can lead to many interesting conclusions, making many explanations take on other forms, making one's mind tremble in horror. For example, when there are too many High-Sequence Beyonders in the same Sequence pathway, the Low-Sequence Beyonders would reduce, and vice-versa.

“…The Beyonder Characteristics had been fixed at the source. It will not increase or decrease. Does this mean that there really is a God who created all the deities, an omnipotent and omniscient God, and everything originated from Him?"

This was the longest Roselle diary that Klein had ever seen. It took up two full pages, and one could imagine that it originally came on a double-sided page. It only became two separate pages after repeated copying.

That's a lot of information… Klein sighed silently.

As a history student who had graduated normally, he had always believed that the Solomon Empire, the Tudor Dynasty, and the Trunsoest Empire came one after the other in a line, with a certain degree of restoration before a new political outcome was established. To his surprise, the War of the Four Emperors described by Mr. Door clearly and unambiguously revealed one thing—all three empires had existed at the same time!

If this were true, then it would really overturn most of the current research on the Fourth Epoch in the field of history. Klein suddenly thought of the original Klein, who was filled with interest towards archeology and the history regarding the Fourth Epoch.

Today, I've helped him achieve his wish… I wonder if Death had already become a true deity during the War of the Four Emperors. It's hard to determine according to Mr. Door's descriptions. I can only first assume that the Emperor of the Underworld, who had obtained benefits from the War of the Four Emperors, had broken through his limits and become a deity, but "He" also went mad as a result…

To have a deity go mad was truly terrifying. Just thinking about the details makes one tremble from the bottom of their heart! It's no wonder that the knowledgeable Emperor Roselle would use the word "horrifying" to describe this matter…

Could it be that the so-called evil gods were crazy orthodox deities?

Would that mean that there might only be evil gods left in this world one day…

Man, does this mean that the end of days cannot be stopped?

Klein smiled to hide the growing solemnity of his emotions. He felt that the future he imagined was filled with a dark gray hue.

At the same time, he raised his evaluation of the Dark Emperor, Blood Emperor, and Night Emperor, believing them to be the pre-eminent mighty figures who were close to being deities.

Perhaps that means Sequence 1 is the peak existence of a single pathway. According to this logic, for Dark Emperor to live for centuries or over a millennium wouldn't be unacceptable. That would explain the original Klein's confusion. He had obtained contradictory findings from the content recorded in the Antigonus family's notebook with his own mentor's viewpoint. He believed that the Dark Emperor was the common name used by every emperor of the Solomon Empire… Perhaps, the Dark Emperor had always been the same Dark Emperor… Of course, other possibilities cannot be eliminated. For example, they could've been replaced two or three times, but is the name of that pathway's Sequence 1, Dark Emperor?

I wonder who Mr. Door is in the history of the Fourth Epoch… Emperor Roselle didn't go into detail when describing his erroneous experiments and accidental coincidences, making it impossible for me to even try to converse with that Mr. Door.

The Laws of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility and Similar Sequence Beyonder Characteristics Conservation shares the same description as the one used by the Captain. Perhaps, the term he used came from Emperor Roselle.

According to the two laws described by Mr. Gate, we can indeed deduce a lot of interesting speculations. For example, with there being so many holy artifacts and High-Sequence Beyonders in the Seven Churches, there shouldn't be many Low-Sequence Beyonders. But this contradicts reality, and the only reasonable explanation is an additional gift from the deities?

For example, is the destruction of the Nation of the Evernight due to the Conservation of Characteristics, that the mere possession of resources

causes it to be in trouble? Or could it be said that their existence seriously weakens the potency of the Evernight pathway and threatens the position of the Goddess?

For example, theoretically speaking, certain Sealed Artifacts could also be used as the main ingredients for potion materials, or they can even be considered equivalent to potions. Of course, the prerequisite is to remove all latent dangers and madness.

…

No wonder the documents that were unearthed called the Fourth Epoch, "the Epoch of the Gods." So it turns out that in this epoch, there are many records of deities descending.

Then what caused them to stop coming, to the point of there not being any revelations?

If it wasn't for the fact that Beyonders receive responses from ritualistic magic, perhaps many of them would've doubted the existence of the deities…

Many ideas came to Klein suddenly as he felt that he had delved deeper into the realm of mysticism in this Beyonder world.

He flipped through the next four pages and was disappointed to realize that they were no longer related to Mr. Door.

His ability as a Clown allowed him to conceal his emotions well, and coupled with the gray fog's obstruction, even Audrey, who was secretly observing him, didn't notice anything amiss.

He gathered his chaotic thoughts and started reading the third page of the diary:

"10th September. I've endured it for a long time, but I still can't help but complain a little.

"I must've had f**king sh*t for brains to chose the Savant path, right?

"Of course, this has indeed allowed me to develop my greatest advantage, allowing the Church to attach great importance to me. But the problem is that the first few Sequences lack any Beyonder powers needed for combat. I can only make do by relying on mystical items and rely way too much on external items.

"For example, Sequence 9 Savant only has extraordinary abilities in memory, learning, and practical skills. For example, Sequence 8 Archaeologist gains a strong physique and corresponding ancient knowledge, and they can only barely apply some ritualistic magic. For example, Sequence 7 Appraiser, whose ability is to quickly identify mystical objects, allowing them to avoid hidden dangers to the greatest extent. For example, Sequence 6 Artisan, who can produce machinery wonder but not very powerful Beyonder objects. Apart from that, one's standard in ritualistic magic will be enhanced. It's no wonder its modern name is Machinery Specialist.

"Comparatively speaking, the Sequence 7 Warlock and Sequence 6 Scrolls Professor of the Mystery Pryer pathway are sufficiently tempting. It would be great if only the Church has the complete Sequence and that the Hidden Sage doesn't exist.

"However, I finally received some good news. After I advance again, I'll gain Beyonder powers combat powers that I can call my own. Sequence 5 Astromancer!

"Its modern name scares me a little. It's actually called Astronomer…

"Am I going to end up as an all-powerful mad scientist?

"Heavens have mercy on me. I was only a second-tier student at the college entrance examination!

It had to be said that Emperor Roselle had a strange talent for making jokes. Even the recently dispirited Klein couldn't help but twitch his mouth, wishing to light a candle for this senior.

Study hard and improve by the day is indeed a wise saying… He lampooned and remembered the unique trait of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery.

They lacked Beyonder powers when it came to combat, but they were good at making and using items.

After flipping to the third page of the diary, Klein continued reading.

"2nd June, the kingdom has created chaos, again and again, instigating wars without being able to completely destroy the Feysac Empire, the Loen Kingdom, and the Feynapotter Kingdom. As such, the kingdom has no choice but to shoulder huge debts, and its economy is on the verge of collapse.

"From my observations, the people, merchants, and soldiers are very dissatisfied. The riots are just lacking a spark! This is my chance.

"But I have to be very careful. The Sauron family has witnessed the history of the Fourth Epoch and is an ancient family with a high possibility of having High-Sequence Beyonders. I need the support of the Church, as well as gain a tacit agreement with the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

"I can't appear immediately. First, I'll let the rebels destroy order before I end it all as a protector. Consul Roselle Gustav. I like that name."

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CHAPTER 218
FREE GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

"June 3rd. After discussing with Edwards and the others, I gave up on the idea of reaching a tacit understanding with the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun. This might very well reveal my true intentions, making the Sauron family and the ancient nobles who support them aware of them in advance and carry out a direct approach. That would make matters extremely difficult and dangerous.

"It's a pity that Grimm died in the Sea of Fog. He was the smartest among us.

"Descend into chaos! Descend! Only with everything in chaos will I get the chance to fish in troubled waters! Only when the Sauron family is incapable of handling this situation will the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun reluctantly acknowledge me!

"Perhaps I should give some help to those rebels, but how should I conceal myself so that no one would notice?

"June 4th, Zaratul from the Secret Order came to visit me in incognito very suddenly."

…

And then? Klein was just feeling intrigued over the reason why Zaratul—leader of the Secret Order—would seek Roselle on the eve of the rebellion and coup d'état when he realized that the two subsequent pages had nothing to do with it.

This made him feel a sense of irrepressible anger.

Although the three diary pages didn't provide very detailed descriptions, with rather straightforward accounts from Roselle, Klein could still feel the famous turmoil in Intis that happened in 1173, more than a hundred years ago.

The outcome was clearly recorded in history textbooks. As a colonel, Republic quashed the rebellion and enacted political changes. The Intis Kingdom was transformed into a republic, with him acting as a self-appointed consul.

In the following 19 years, he reformed the penal code, encouraged inventions, and protected the industrial revolution. He greatly increased the country's strength and fought wars both north and south, making Lenburg, Masin, Segar, and other countries protectorates under the Intis Republic. He also made the three mighty countries on the Northern Continent—the Feysac Empire, the Loen Kingdom, and the Feynapotter Kingdom—bow their heads.

At the end of 1192, almost twenty years after his appointment as consul, Roselle converted the Republic into an Empire, declaring himself Caesar.

Less than six years later, he perished in the White Maple Palace, ending the Fifth Epoch's most legendary piece of history to date.

The more he thought about it, the more he felt that there was more to Roselle's death than what appeared on the surface. It was just like how this famous historical event definitely had power struggles amongst Beyonders behind it, and that a Beyonder faction had leveled the situation, unlike the descriptions in textbooks.

*As expected, one of the so-called Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Grimm, died in the Sea of Fog… In a previous diary page, Roselle had written that there was something wrong with this 'horseman.' It seems to have something to do with the tiny island where they discovered many

extraordinary beings… Not only was it a fortuitous encounter, but it was also a dangerous one… *Klein thought of a previous entry and turned to the fifth page, feeling emotional.

The contents of this page are of little value. They consist of Roselle's comments after drinking an 1128 Aurmir red wine, the disillusion of finding the woman who had gained his adoration in his youth to be aged and out of shape, as well as a degenerate summary of a certain period when he was addicted to playing cards.

The sixth page was about the same as the first one, with accounts of his daily life. However, the last one made Klein's eyes light up.

"8th April, I have to send someone to investigate the Secret Order to get more information. I can't repeat my passiveness from before. I can't let Zaratul lead me by the nose anymore."

*So, did you discover anything, Comrade Roselle? *Since Klein couldn't find the rest of the information, he could only force himself to calm down and wait for the next gathering when The Hanged Man would hand over another six pages.

He knew that an investigation from over a hundred years ago was unlikely to help him find any clues related to the Secret Order Association. After all, over such a long period of time, other than the special ones, many of the High-Sequence Beyonders would've already died of old age, not to mention the middle or low-level members. However, Klein believed that this would help him obtain inspiration and grasp the precise identity and activity patterns that the Secret Order often used.

Putting down the six diary pages, Klein tapped his right index finger on the edge of the long bronze table, slowly moving his gaze from Miss Justice to The Hanged Man, and then to The Sun.

Right, in the diary just now, there was a line Emperor Roselle described: "God who created all the deities, an omnipotent and omniscient God" This

is very similar to the customs of the City of Silver. Where did he hear this from? Could it be from that most ancient and secret organization which controls the world from behind the scenes? This organization was established before the Forsaken Land of the Gods was forsaken?

Hmm… Suddenly, Klein had a new idea. He said with a low and gentle smile, "Roselle mentioned some hidden history in his diary, and mentioned some simple general knowledge. The latter reminded me of something that I don't recall informing you all."

Audrey suddenly fell into a trance. She immediately turned her body around and looked at the very top of the ancient long table in pleasant surprise.

*Mr. Fool is taking the initiative to mention the contents of Roselle's diary? What would it say? *She was so excited and thrilled that she completely forgot that she was a Spectator.

Compared to her, The Hanged Man, Alger, was much more composed. However, the subconscious straightening of his back heartlessly betrayed him.

Only The Sun, Derek, had always believed that the items of interest to Mr. Fool contained many mysteries, but he didn't know anything about Emperor Roselle and didn't know what this name represented in the Northern Continent. Thus, he just found it difficult to hide his curiosity and didn't reveal any unusual behavior.

"Mr. Fool, did Emperor Roselle mention some general knowledge? I'm willing to pay for this information," Audrey couldn't help but say.

However, I want it to be communicated to me privately! She added silently in her heart.

Klein chuckled and said, "There's no need. This is very simple general knowledge."

"After reading this part of the diary, as the summoner of the Tarot Club, I feel it's necessary to let all of you know this. Of course, I'm very certain that some of you are already aware of this."

He was mainly referring to The Sun. The City of Silver had a history of two to three thousand years, so it was impossible for them to not discover the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility.

Moreover, they were in a relatively extreme environment. Even if the surrounding areas had no lack of monsters in the darkness, there would still be times when they failed to obtain the corresponding materials. In order to pass on their heritage, in order for their city to continue on, using the Beyonder Characteristics of the remains of their predecessors to create a potion wasn't particularly unacceptable.

To them, this was perhaps a sacred and glorious ceremony.

Of course, Klein could see from a previous exchange that The Hanged Man knew something.

It's a pity that Miss Justice cannot always be made to pay in gold pounds and transfer the money to my adorers. My adorer can't appear any less impressive… I mustn't destroy the image of the powerful man that Mr. Azik has created… Yes, I'll give it a try when I have the chance. After all, no matter how powerful a being is, they'll have subordinates that run errands. For instance, the Evernight Goddess's Sleepless… No one would ever suspect that the Evernight Goddess isn't a true deity just because the low-level Nighthawks are weak… Klein sighed silently.

"Thank you very much! Mr. Fool, you are just too generous!" Audrey replied in joy.

She was originally feeling three seconds of regret for the coarse action of using cash to purchase the information.

Klein stopped rapping the table and described with a calm voice, "The first piece of general knowledge—Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility. The characteristics of a Beyonder is never destroyed or reduced. It's only passed from one carrier to the next."

Without realizing it, I used Captain's tone… Klein's lips subconsciously curled upwards.

It cannot be destroyed or reduced. It just transfers from one carrier to another… Audrey ruminated over Mr. Fool's description, feeling that there was too much meaning in that simple sentence.

Her emerald green eyes turned, and when she saw that neither The Hanged Man nor The Sun showed any signs of surprise or contemplation, she immediately understood that these two members of the Tarot Club had long known of this law.

Only I didn't know… She thought, feeling somewhat aggrieved, but she quickly began to praise Mr. Fool for his kindness.

At this point, Klein added, "After a Rampager dies, they will leave behind an item of Beyonder Characteristics. It could be the main ingredient, or it could be a mystical artifact that requires sealing. An ordinary Beyonder's death results in similar results. However, the item left behind will be equivalent to the corresponding potion without the supplementary ingredients. Of course, the item alone will contain Beyonder powers. They can be used as a half-mystical object."

The plain and indifferent words instantly echoed in Audrey's mind. Layers stacked upon layers and, bit by bit, it eventually reached a crescendo.

Audrey thought of cannibalism and the question—would a Sequence pathway be severed if the source of Beyonder materials ceased to exist—she had asked The Hanged Man previously came to mind.

Now, she knew the answer, but she would've rather not heard it. She felt like she was having a nightmare!

How can it be so cruel? Why is it so dark? Audrey had previously seen some bad situations that involved Beyonders, but those situations were only caused by a person's own perverse and evil nature. For example, Mr. A or Qilangos. They didn't affect her yearning and love for mysticism and the Beyonder world.

However, this time, she discovered that the mystical world was filled with grayness and darkness.

*Wake up, Audrey, you can't be naive! Consider that the cruelty and darkness described by Mr. Fool are predictable. Since he had chosen this path, he had to bravely walk down it! *Audrey consoled herself, easing her mood a little.

She saw that The Hanged Man and the Sun were making only habitual movements and appeared to understand what had just been said.

Hmph! Mr. Hanged Man is terrible. He even wanted to use this information as an exchange previously! Ugh… This information is indeed worth a lot and is quite important, but it's only a simple piece of general knowledge to us and Mr. Fool… Audrey suddenly wanted to laugh a little. Her mood began to improve, and she slowly pushed all the extreme examples that she had just thought of aside.

Klein wasn't surprised by the three members' reaction. He continued in a calm tone, "The second piece of general knowledge—Law of Similar Sequence Beyonder Characteristics Conservation."

Law of Similar Sequence Beyonder Characteristics Conservation… The Hanged Man slightly changed his sitting posture. He felt that he understood something, but he was unable to fully understand what this law represented and what it consisted of.

Justice and The Sun shared the same feelings as he did. They were unable to directly understand the true meaning behind this law.

"Why Similar Sequence?" Alger couldn't help asking.

Klein smiled and replied, "What do you wish to pay for the answer?"

One of the ideas he had was that general knowledge was free, but any explanation required a fee. This both matched his status and didn't waste the information.

Free things cost the most.

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CHAPTER 219
EXPLANATION

If The Fool had simply mentioned that there was some simple general knowledge contained in Roselle's diary, The Hanged Man, Alger, wouldn't necessarily be determined to pay the "price" for the answer, partly because the description of it being "simple" killed his curiosity. Another aspect stemmed from his constant wariness against making trades with The Fool, as it reminded him of the examples when deals were made with evil gods and devils.

But now that he knew the so-called contents of simple general knowledge, his interest was piqued. Yet, he was unable to understand parts of the description, much less gain any actual or deep grasp of the concept. Therefore, he couldn't hold back his urges to ask in absolute reverence, "Mr. Fool, what kind of payment do you want?"

"Yes, yes!" Justice Audrey nodded her head nearly indiscernibly but very frequently, indicating that this was something she wanted to ask as well.

Although The Sun Derrick remained silent and didn't make any additional body gestures, the look he gave to The Fool explained everything.

Klein, who was waiting for a such a response, smiled and said, "Information regarding the Secret Order."

"The Secret Order…" The Hanged Man Alger muttered to himself.

He wasn't unfamiliar with this term. He had once received payment for explaining to Miss Justice about many secret organizations, including the Secret Order.

Audrey and Derrick both frowned subconsciously. The former's only understanding of the Secret Order was limited to what The Hanged Man had described. And the latter had never even heard of such an organization.

Klein had long anticipated what The Sun would feel, but he wasn't surprised. According to his conjecture, the area where the City of Silver was located should've been a part of the Third Epoch after the appearance of the first Blasphemy Slate and before the appearance of the second Blasphemy Slate. It was even possible that it was the direct catalyst or manifestation of the cataclysm. The Zaratul family had only stepped onto the stage of history in the Fourth Epoch, and the Secret Order was created in the latter half of the Fourth Epoch. There was no way both entities could've existed in the same period.

It would surprise Klein if the Sun were to know about the Secret Order. He would then have to overturn some of his speculations, reconstruct his knowledge of the City of Silver, the Forsaken Land of the Gods, and the Zaratul family.

After nearly twenty seconds of silence, Alger looked at The Fool in the gray fog, deliberated his words and said, "I will accept this request and help you gather information regarding the Secret Order.

"Can you make 'payment' in advance?"

It wasn't surprising that a suspected deity was interested in an ancient and secret organization; therefore, Alger wasn't puzzled about it.

More importantly, after many gatherings, he had a guess in his mind, which was that Mr. Fool's state wasn't perfect, that "He" might be in a predicament, that all "His" attempts and the actions of "His" adorers on the Northern and Southern Continents were to help "Him" break free from "His" confines.

This might even be related to the huge secret of why the seven deities no longer descend upon the real world after the Fourth Epoch… A thought

flashed through Alger's mind, and he shuddered as he felt himself entering the realm of the gods.

Upon hearing The Hanged Man's request, Klein leaned back in his chair and nodded.

"No problem.

"If the information you have collected exceeds the value of the answer, I will provide you with further compensation."

As for the circumstances in which the value of the answer was lacking, it is naturally up to the esteemed Mr. Fool to decide. If he has the ability to make the additional payment, so be it. If not, forget it… Klein silently added.

Justice Audrey's eyes lit up all of a sudden. She raised her hand and said, "I want to partake in this deal."

Klein laughed and replied, "Sure."

Frankly speaking, his main target was Miss Justice because she was a local of Backlund and she had mixed herself into several Beyonder circles. Her access to information in the "Land of Hope" far exceeded his, considering it was his first time in the capital. She was also more informed than The Hanged Man who was out at sea most of the time.

According to the earlier revelation he received from his divination, Klein believed that the clues related to the Secret Order would appear in Backlund and not anywhere else.

The Sun Derrick listened quietly and after some thought, said, "I'm willing to use the payment I reserved and exchange it for the answer."

In the previous three-way deal, he had traded the Sequence 8 Telepathist formula for Sequence 9 Bard. Klein had promised to compensate him, and

his choice at the time had been to save it up and prepare for the subsequent potion formulas and main ingredients.

Klein nodded his head and gave an explanation that he had long prepared.

"The so-called Similar Sequence refers to how High-Sequence Beyonders are exchangeable with other pathways.

"Let me give an example. The Death pathway's Sequence 5, Gatekeeper, can not only be advanced normally, but one can also choose the Giant pathway, which is the Gatekeeper pathway's Sequence 4, Demon Hunter.

"This won't lead to the danger of losing control, nor will it accumulate madness. It's different from taking the wrong potion.

"Of course, if it's not a similar Sequence, a semi-deranged state is the best result."

"Exchangeable?" Audrey blurted out, surprised and delighted.

She was surprised that Sequence pathways weren't completely fixed, that they didn't need to follow the original path all the way. The price of switching wasn't being semi-deranged and never to advance again. Within the 22 divine pathways, there were special circumstances and Sequences which were similar!

And what delighted her was that she had another chance to choose again in the future. It was just like being able to select something that caught her interest at Philip's Department Store. It was a wonderful experience!

*So that's how it is… *Alger silently muttered to himself, suddenly feeling like he had understood several things at once, and he had resolved many of the doubts accumulated in his past experiences.

This information is way too valuable! As expected of Mr. Fool. So-called simple general knowledge is enough to shock and awe most Low-Sequence

Beyonders and benefit them immensely. He sighed inwardly.

Derrick the Sun was a little disappointed because he had no intention of changing Sequences. He wanted to be the Sun that lit up the darkness and dispelled the curse.

However, he quickly recalled an incident that happened in the City of Silver:

The former Chief, a powerhouse who had the greatest possibility of breaking past the limitations of Demon Hunter, had built a mausoleum for himself and went deep inside, making it his home.

Afterwards, he appeared less and less, until the main door of the mausoleum could no longer be opened.

Back then, the citizens of the City of Silver all believed that a problem had arisen during the Chief's advancement and that he had gone mad, to the point of being close to losing control. He was believed to have finished himself off.

Now, combined with the description from The Fool, The Sun suddenly thought of another possibility.

That Chief might've been attempting to advance in Sequence through a similar pathway!

In one of his explorations deep into the darkness, he had acquired the corresponding formula for the Death pathway, and the mausoleum might have been a special requirement… But in the end, he still failed? But why didn't he turn into a monster? What did he encounter in that dark mausoleum?

The City of Silver doesn't have the subsequence Sequence potion formulas after Demon Hunter?

As these thoughts crossed his mind, Derrick was suddenly jolted back to his senses by Miss Justice's reserved voice.

"Mr. Fool, may I ask what other pathways are exchangeable with the Spectator Sequencer pathway?"

Sequence 4 Demon Hunter sounds pretty good… That's very suitable for me, very suitable for 'Justice!' Audrey admired the first High-Sequence name that she knew.

I want to know too… Klein was tempted to answer Miss Justice's question in such a manner.

Before he could say anything, Audrey added in a faltering tone, "I-I can pay for the answer to this question. H-how many gold pounds do you think is enough? I-I believe that your adorer will need a certain amount of funds for their activities…"

Having said that, she recalled how Mr. Fool's adorer had easily finished Pirate Admiral Qilangos who possessed Creeping Hunger. Clearly, he was a High-Sequence Beyonder, so she nearly said, "I apologize. Mr. Fool, treat it as though I never said a thing."

However, since she had already asked, she couldn't back down! *Come on, Audrey! Perhaps The Fool has a weaker adorer?* Audrey quietly bit at her lips, silently encouraging herself.

Gold pounds? Klein thought about it seriously and said, "We'll make the transaction after enough information about the Secret Order is gathered."

As he spoke, he recalled his informant in the Psychology Alchemists, Daxter Guderian.

Captain and I-I… Sigh… Daxter's identity as an informant can no longer be verified. I wonder if it's a tragedy or a comedy… It's a pity that I can no longer contact him anymore. Otherwise, it would be the most convenient

way to obtain the information regarding the Spectator pathway from him… Klein smirked.

"Alright." Audrey answered happily.

The conversation between the two made The Hanged Man, who was about to ask a similar question, shut his mouth. He left it until he had gathered enough information on the Secret Order.

After a brief silence, Audrey turned her head to look at Mr. Fool and raised her hand very slightly.

After receiving a nod of confirmation, she turned to the member opposite her and asked with a sense of anticipation, "Mr. Hanged Man, my tip allowed you to finish Rear Admiral Hurricane. Have you prepared the complete pituitary gland of a mature Rainbow Salamander?"

*That's one of the reasons why I returned to the sea… *Alger nodded gently and said, "I've gotten the Beyonder material you wanted.

"But how should I give it to you?"

How? How should it be given to me… Audrey froze for a moment as she lost herself in thought.

It's impossible to just give my address… Nor can I go through Xio and Fors. That will reveal the fact that I'm a Beyonder… Hmm, it's not impossible. Emperor Roselle once said that when we should choose the lesser of two evils…

At that moment, Klein's heart stirred. He lightly tapped the edge of the long table and smiled.

"Miss, Sir, are you willing to cooperate with me in making an attempt regarding this matter?"

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CHAPTER 220
KLEIN'S SACRIFICIAL TRIAL

"Attempt?" Justice was instantly thrilled as she nodded her, acting reserved and elegant.

"I'm very willing to cooperate."

As a Spectator, she clearly remembered that Mr. Fool had only used the word "attempt" on two things. The first time involved bringing her and The Hanged Man into this mysterious space, and the second time was when they were given an honorary name so that they could attempt to make a prayer. And the outcome was sufficiently successful, revealing "His" true nature.

What would it be this time? It really is something to look forward to! Audrey restrained her impatience and tried her best to behave as a qualified Spectator.

Attempt… Alger suddenly tensed up, viewing The Fool's proposal with utmost wariness.

*What does "He" want to do? What is "His" true purpose? Is this good or bad for me? *One by one, thoughts popped up in his mind. The rapidly rotting appearance of Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos surfaced in Alger's mind.

Finally, he lowered his head and respectfully replied, "Your wish is my wish."

Beside him, Derrick looked at The Hanged Man, and then at Justice, wondering why they were so sensitive to this so-called "attempt."

Klein lightly tapped his fingers on the edge of the long bronze table and smiled.

"This attempt will make your transaction easier and safer, and it will definitely be sufficiently confidential."

He turned his head to the side and looked at The Hanged Man. He said with a moderate pace, "Do you remember the sacrificial ritual described by The Sun?"

Klein had deliberately mentioned it to show how open he was. It made it difficult for the members of the Tarot Club to imagine that the sacrificial ceremony he was about to provide had actually first been obtained from The Sun and that he had gone through all that time and effort back then to trick The Sun out of a template sacrificial ritual.

"I remember. I do come into contact with such things usually," Alger answered truthfully, but his heart was throbbing.

Since the orthodox gods rarely responded to similar rituals, the word "sacrifice" had often been equated to evil gods and devils in the Fifth Epoch!

Thinking about how this could lead to a terrifying outcome, The Hanged Man felt as if he was walking at the edge of the abyss. If he wasn't careful, he would fall in, only to be eroded and devoured.

Klein followed his plans and didn't provide further explanations. He nodded slightly and said, "My idea is for you to sacrifice the Beyonder material to me through the ritual and I'll bestow them to Miss Justice. A transaction like this will be beneficial for both of you."

That can be done? Audrey was instantly dumbfounded. She felt that this exceeded the limits of her imagination.

But she very quickly came to her senses and understood the advantages of this method and the true nature of a deity hidden behind this simple act!

Mr. Fool is great! As expected, our Tarot Club will be different from the other secret organizations! We'll use the method of deities to exchange for material goods and ingredients! Audrey almost said "Praise the Lady" in her mind out of habit, but in the end, she said, "Praise Mr. Fool" instead.

Alger turned even warier as he entered a state of calm thoughts.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, what do I need to do?"

He tried to figure out the true purpose of The Fool from the process of the sacrificial ritual.

Klein lightly pressed his right hand and said, "Like I said, this is only an attempt. It might not succeed, so it will need your cooperation.

"First of all, prepare an altar. There's no need to make it too complicated; it can be very simple and crude. The only requirement is to engrave or draw this symbol."

As he spoke, a screen of light appeared in front of him. On it was the symbol of the hidden "Pupil-less Eye" and the mysterious symbol of the partial contorted lines; the same symbol on the back of The Fool's chair.

After previous experiments without using materials with spirituality, Klein was certain that the sacrificial ceremony he designed could create an illusory gate above the gray fog, similar to the Door of Summoning. However, his strength alone couldn't construct a stable channel, and he could only use the uniqueness of the mysterious space above the gray fog to complete the sacrifice.

Therefore, he was 90% confident that the ceremony would be successful. The only problem was if an ordinary passageway could be constructed

using ordinary materials that contained spirituality or did it need to be Beyonder materials as well as a sufficient number of them.

I'll let Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man bear the cost of this experiment… In any case, they knew from the very beginning that the Tarot Club was a product of an attempt. It can be foreseen that there would be other attempts subsequently and failure is inevitable. Even deities are no exception… Klein decided to transfer the costs.

As The Hanged Man, Justice, and the Sun were attempting to memorize the symbol, Klein chuckled.

"If you forget, you can pray to me, and then you can 'remember.'"

"Alright," Audrey answered happily.

With Mr. Fool, rituals aren't tedious and troublesome! she thought happily.

The Hanged Man nodded in response as Klein continued the description.

"Secondly, follow the normal procedure, but there's no need to burn any more additional herbs or apply the holy oil. There's no restriction on time, just chanting my name is enough.

"Remember, use ancient Hermes or Jotun to recite this piece of prayer.

"Your devoted servant prays for your attention,

"I pray for you to take his offerings.

"I pray for you to open the gates to your Kingdom.

"After you finish chanting, combine the materials that contain spirituality with the natural power created by the incantation, and await my response.

"If you don't succeed in this step, change from materials containing spirituality to Beyonder materials, and try again from the beginning."

After listening quietly to the procedure, Alger felt that his previous guess was very likely to be the truth.

The Fool was in a predicament!

He offered alluring attempts, making attempts one step at a time and planned to use himself, Justice, and The Sun to slowly break free of the restrictions. In the end, he might even descend into the real world!

This was also the true reason why "He" had initially pulled people into this mysterious space, agreeing to the establishment of the Tarot Club!

Even without this previous speculation, Alger believed that he would've come to the same conclusion after hearing of the experimental procedures required after the sacrificial ritual and comparing it with The Fool's previous attempts.

The only thing that stumped him was the possession of a powerful adorer; therefore, there was no need for him to use himself, Justice, and The Sun. His adorer could make similar attempts.

There must be secrets I don't know about yet… The attempts need to be sufficiently secretive. And perhaps "His" adorer is being watched by certain existences? Alger began connecting the dots.

After Klein finished describing the ritual, he asked in a low but gentle voice, "The sacrificial ritual needs a specific time. Mr. Hanged Man, when do you plan on making the attempt?"

This was different from responding to a request which could have a delayed response. The stable passage created by the sacrificial ritual could only exist for a very short period of time, so Klein had to wait above the gray fog ahead of time.

"The Rainbow Salamander's pituitary gland is the only Beyonder material I have with me for the time being. As for materials with spirituality, I do have quite a lot… Mr. Fool, once the gathering ends, I'll immediately attempt the first scenario. If it fails, I'll seek out other Beyonder materials. Once I obtain anything, I'll inform you by praying to confirm a time," Alger said as he couldn't help but turn his gaze towards Miss Justice.

As a Spectator, Audrey instantly understood what he meant. She answered without the slightest hesitation, "If any additional Beyonder materials are required, I'll compensate you afterward. Well… I can't guarantee the specific type of material you would want."

As expected of the wealthy Miss Justice… The Fool—Klein—couldn't help but sigh before chuckling.

"We have come to an agreement."

He looked at Justice and said after some thought, "Once Mr. Hanged Man's attempt succeeds, I'll inform you of the bestowment ceremony."

"Alright!" Audrey was entirely confident with Mr. Fool's abilities.

After answering the question, a sudden thought struck her as she realized that the exchange of money could also be done through this method. Of course, this was only if the attempt was a success.

I wonder if items without any spirituality would work or not… I'll ask Mr. Fool again after the attempt is successful… Audrey's lips curled as she thought of the beautiful future.

With the sacrifice and bestowment topic coming to an end, she deliberated for a few seconds before saying, "Mr. Fool, I've found two ladies suitable for our Tarot Club. They're both Beyonders and have their own circle and resources in Backlund. They're also able to keep a secret and have decent personalities. Are you willing to let them join the gathering?"

Does Justice want to strengthen her faction within the Tarot Club? This was the most instinctual thought that Alger had.

Derrick was very interested in this matter as he looked sideways at Mr. Fool, waiting for his answer in anticipation.

Klein appeared to be in a bit of a dilemma. Previously, he had imagined that the members of the Tarot Club wouldn't know each other, and they would then develop their own subordinates, forming a relatively tight and secretive organization.

This way, even if a certain member was exposed, captured, or had their spirit channeled, it wouldn't have much of an impact on the Tarot Club.

But Miss Justice's description just happened to hit his weak spot. He was hoping to find clues regarding the Secret Order and Lanevus by acquainting himself with Beyonders with different circles and resources in Backlund.

If it's done through Justice, the person involved would eventually hold back… However, I'm not sure if it's possible to pull them up above the gray fog simply by reciting my name… In order to maintain his image, Klein didn't think too much and instead procrastinated on it.

He said calmly, "It will require a certain amount of examination.

"Miss Justice, use a clandestine method that wouldn't expose yourself to let them know of my name to garner interest in them."

When Audrey saw that her proposal was about to be accepted, she immediately responded in excitement, "Yes, Mr. Fool!"

After a few more exchanges, the gathering came to an end. The Sun, The Hanged Man, and Justice returned, while Klein remained in the gray fog, waiting for the sacrifice.

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CHAPTER 221
THE TAROT CLUB AT A HIGHER LEVEL

The Blue Avenger was like a leaf on the surface of the undulating waves of the Sonia Sea. At times, it was raised high and sometimes low from the ebbing of the waves, but there was no sign of it being at risk of capsizing.

Alger Wilson stood in the captain cabin, his back to the shelves of red and white wine, as he subconsciously paced around.

Finally, he gritted his teeth and returned to the mahogany desk with a grim expression. He removed the brass sextant, found a piece of paper and a pen, and leaned over to draw the complex, mysterious symbol given to him by The Fool.

With a Seafarer's memory, Alger quickly completed the first step of the sacrificial ritual.

Then, he opened the drawer and took out a candle. He set up the ritual according to the dualism principles and placed a candle above the symbol that was formed by the combination of the Pupil-less Eye and the partial contorted lines. One candle was placed in the middle that represented the person making the sacrifice.

After cleaning up all the items on the table, Alger condensed pure water in the palm of his hand and wiped the altar clean. He then used the silver dagger from the ceremony to create a sealing wall that surrounded his desk.

After doing all this, he used his spirituality to light up the two candles and retreated a few steps under the dim light.

Taking a deep breath, Alger lowered his head and recited in ancient Hermes,

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era,

"You are the mysterious ruler above the gray fog;

"You are the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"Your devoted servant prays for your attention,

"I pray for you to take his offerings.

"I pray for you to open the gates to your Kingdom."

…

This ancient incantation reverberated within the wall of spirituality, stirring up spiraling gales as they swept forth with the force of nature.

It was the oldest sacrificial language created by human Beyonders, and it contained many mysteries itself. However, it lacked sufficient protection for the user.

Bearing with the pain that was akin to having knives slicing across his skin, Alger took out a small dark brown glass bottle from his pocket, unscrewed the lid, and poured out a lot of sesame-shaped granules.

These granules swirled with a metallic luster and exuded an indescribable sense of beauty.

Alger scattered these granules into the wind.

Whoosh!

The gale grew stronger but was no longer tempestuous. It was dyed in two separate colors—silver and black.

As they continued to collide and mix, the two differently-colored winds were infused into the candle flame that symbolized The Fool, burgeoning and tearing open an illusory ordinary-sized door. Its surface was carved with the same symbol that Alger had drawn.

At this moment, Klein witnessed the appearance of the hazy door behind his high-back chair. He could feel the spirituality in the air that was rippling apart and stimulating the mysterious space.

It seems to be working… Klein suddenly had a premonition and immediately spread out his spirituality, infusing it with upheavals and stimulation.

Creak!

Amidst the insubstantial sounds, the blurry door slowly opened!

In the captain cabin, Alger suddenly saw the illusory door, formed out of wind and light, open. Behind it was deep darkness formed from an innumerable number of almost invisible shadows. They were lustrous splendors encompassing massive amounts of knowledge. Situated above them was the thick gray fog with the ancient palace overlooking the real world.

Such a scene caused Alger to involuntarily tremble. It was a deep fear, an indescribable excitement.

He hurriedly picked up the Rainbow Salamander's pituitary gland that he had long prepared. He held it with both hands, and, with his head bowed, he raised the palm-sized object which was constantly changing in color and had a soft feel to the ridges to the illusory door.

Alger's hands grew lighter under the sudden appearance and instant disappearance of a suction force. He lost the slight tingling sensation that the Rainbow Salamander's pituitary gland gave him.

He didn't dare raise his head until he heard the deep voice of The Fool echoing in his ears.

"You did well."

"It's my honor," Alger answered without any hesitation.

He looked ahead again, only to see that the illusory door had disappeared. The gale had stopped, and the candle flames had returned to their original state.

After the candles were extinguished according to the normal procedures, Alger sat down with a complicated expression and said to himself silently, *In the beginning, only people could be pulled into the world above the gray fog… After a while, responses could be made by listening to prayers… Now, sacrifices and bestowment can be performed… Mr. Fool is freeing himself from his predicament one step at a time, and bit by bit, will he enter the real world?*

This guess or conclusion frightened and worried Alger, but he also felt a bit of delight.

At least I'm a member of the Tarot Club—one of the earliest members… He sighed.

…

In the majestic palace above the gray fog, Klein was playing with the pituitary gland of the Rainbow Salamander. Various colors were reflected on his face as they constantly changed colors.

A slight tingling sensation came from his palm, and a strong sense of accomplishment filled his heart, causing him to reveal a genuine smile.

In the future, the Tarot Club will become even more miraculous… After reflecting over the situation, Klein extended his spirituality and sent his will to the crimson star representing Miss Justice.

After returning to her bedroom, Audrey was no longer able to sit quietly on the edge of the bed. She would restlessly flip through the books by her bed and from time to time, scrutinize herself in the mirror with an unfocused gaze.

She was looking forward to the completion of The Hanged Man's sacrificial ritual, but she was also afraid that the result would be a failure.

Emperor Roselle had said that one must remain calm and collected when important matters arise… Audrey, come on, take a deep breath… Or perhaps, I should go tease the dog? However, Susie can talk and think, so she's an entity with her own dignity. I can't just casually tease her… Audrey's mind wandered, her hand unconsciously wringing an ornate doll dressed in splendid clothing.

After an unknown period of time, a thick gray fog suddenly appeared before her eyes, and in the depths of the fog, there was a lofty chair.

Sitting there, The Fool said with a smile, "Miss Justice, the attempt was successful. Have you prepared the materials that contain spirituality?"

That's great! As expected of Mr Fool! Audrey forgot The Hanged Man's role in this matter. She held back her excitement and said, "Yes, I always have such materials with me."

Audrey had been the same even before she joined the Tarot Club, but back then, she didn't know which materials could be considered to contain spirituality. She had merely moved them from the family treasury in accordance with the various essential oil formulas she had gathered.

Klein nodded slightly and said, "When do you plan on holding the ritual?

"This is based on the premise that there are no Beyonders around you."

Does a Beyonder dog count… Audrey looked at the tightly-shut door, feeling a small tug at her conscience.

"I can do it now."

Klein tersely acknowledged.

"The ritual's process is the same as I described previously. All you need to do is change the prayer to—

"Your devoted servant prays for your attention,

"I pray for you to open the gates to your Kingdom.

"I pray for you to give me strength.

"In addition to this, use the dualism method."

Audrey thought it over, fighting the urge to nod, and she began preparing for the ritual.

When the illusory door opened, and a scene even more illusory than the starry sky appeared, Audrey felt intoxicated in both body and mind.

This is the mysterious world I've always been pursuing. This is the kind of feeling I've always wanted! She praised Mr. Fool wholeheartedly.

It's faith towards the Goddess, but for The Fool, it's worship. Audrey silently explained herself in her mind.

Soon after, she was stunned to see that there was something on the "altar." It was a soft object with lustrous color and was filled with ridges.

"The Rainbow Salamander's pituitary gland!" Audrey felt a surge of joy in her heart. Her eyes lit up as she had the urge to step forward and grab it.

However, her customs of etiquette took hold of her as she sincerely praised Mr. Fool once again.

After finishing the ritual, she impatiently walked forward and carefully examined the Beyonder material five times.

Our Tarot Club is at a higher level than all the other secret organizations… Audrey secretly felt smug.

She then glanced warily at the door, as if afraid of Susie's sudden intrusion.

She had to redouble her efforts and immediately concoct the potion to complete her advancement!

A few minutes later, she held a bottle of liquid that contained constantly changing lusters that could shine to the bottom of everyone's hearts.

She confidently drank the Telepathist potion and successfully tide through the integration stage with the Beyonder characteristics, achieving an advancement.

The view before her seemed to clear up significantly, with a great increase in other aspects. Audrey familiarly used Cogitation to restrain the dissipating spirituality.

After her Sequence stabilized, she smiled and walked briskly to the door, letting in the golden retriever. She saw the obvious suspicion on Susie's face.

"You took far longer than usual." Susie didn't hide her thoughts.

Audrey sat down on an ottoman and dryly laughed before changing the subject.

"Susie, tell me—how should I secretly inform Xio and Fors about a particular matter without revealing myself; yet get them interested?"

Before she finished her sentence, Audrey had begun to seriously ponder over the mission Mr. Fool had assigned her.

Then, she looked at Susie, and Susie looked back at her. The human and dog both fell into deep thought at the same moment.

…

After completing his goal, Klein returned to reality, slept for a little more than an hour before hurrying out the door. He spent a pound to buy a pair of gold-rimmed glasses, wigs, and a variety of mustaches that could be torn off and stuck on with adhesives. They were disguises he would need later.

Before dinner, he made a trip to East Borough, the most crowded area and the most unsafe part of the city. He rented a one-bedroom house at the rent of four soli, three pence a week. He paid two weeks rent and a deposit, coming up to a total of 17 solis.

Only then did Klein complete all his early preparations. East Borough also left a deep impression on him. Most of the streets here were the same as Tingen's Lower Street, but the area that shared the traits was many times larger.

The clothes of the residents here were old but decent. Many of them were dressed in shabby clothes with sallow skin and thin frames. It was as though they would turn into beasts at any moment due to their hunger or poverty. Therefore, gangs ran rampant in East Borough.

When he got back to Cherwood Borough, Klein felt as if he had entered heaven from hell.

For the next two days, he experimented with using his spirituality to perform the rituals and create charms. He no longer prayed to the Goddess

and waited for the effects of his tiny advertisements to bear fruit.

On Thursday morning, Klein finally heard the doorbell ring.

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CHAPTER 222
THE FIRST JOB

Ding! Dong! A rope was being tugged, causing the doorbell and the sound it made to constantly tinkle and send its sound echoing throughout the spacious but relatively empty living room.

Klein, who was seated on the sofa reading a newspaper to study the various investment opportunities, stood up. He was wearing a white shirt and a black vest without a bow tie, just like what one would wear at home.

The first job in my career as a detective? But I can't always be at home, waiting for a mission to arrive. Yes… I need to hang a notice on the door, along with a fountain pen, so that clients can write down the time of their next visit and allow me to prepare in advance… However, for a new detective in this profession, without any fame, doing so would basically be the same as not having a "next time"…Sigh, I can only go through the trouble of performing a divination in the morning to see if I would receive any jobs for the day. And if so, what time so as to make plans… Of course, it's also possible that I would miss out on missions from powerful Beyonders. Well, so be it, it might be a good thing after all…

He walked to the door, and without looking through the peephole, the image of the visitors outside appeared in his mind:

One of them was an old lady in a black plush hat. Her back was slightly hunched, and her face was deeply wrinkled. Her skin was shriveled and sallow, but her dark dress was very formal and neat.

Her temples were completely white, but her blue eyes were quite lively. She was looking at the young man beside her, gesturing for him to pull the

doorbell again.

The young man was in his twenties, with eyes similar to those of the old lady's. In the progressively cold weather, he wore a black double-breasted coat, a half top hat, and a bow tie like he was about to attend a banquet, it was as if he wouldn't relax his demands of himself at any moment.

With the help of a Clown's premonition, Klein turned the handle, opened the door, and greeted his visitors with a smile before the bell could ring again.

"Good morning, Madam, Sir. What a wonderful day it is, at least up to this point for I have already seen the sun for five minutes."

He spoke of the weather in a slightly exaggerated manner, small talk that had been popular in Backlund for more than a century.

"Yes, it's always shy and doesn't come out from behind the fog and the dark clouds." The old lady nodded in agreement.

By her side, the lad asked, "Are you Detective Sherlock Moriarty?"

"Yes, and what may I help you with? I'm sorry, please come in. Let's sit down and talk." Klein turned his body to the side, making way for his guests as he pointed to the guest area.

"No, there's no need. I don't want to waste any time. My poor Brody is still waiting for me to save it!" the old lady said with a rather sharp voice.

"It?" Klein noticed the most important pronoun and suddenly had a bad feeling.

The very formally dressed young man nodded and said, "Brody is a cat owned by my grandmother, Madam Doris. He went missing last night, and I hope you can help us find him. We live at the end of this street, and I'm

willing to pay you 5 soli for it. Of course, if you can prove that you've spent more time and effort than that, I'll make it up to you."

Find a cat? The reason why you're entrusting me with this job is simply because of the convenience stemming from how we live on the same street… Klein felt that this wasn't the detective career that he had imagined.

It makes me look like a clown… Well, I can't turn down my first business deal. This is a seer's point of view… He pondered for a few seconds and asked, "Can you describe it in detail?"

Granny Doris spoke out before the young man could open his mouth.

"Brody is a lovely, lively black cat. It's very healthy, has beautiful green eyes, and loves to eat cooked chicken breast. Goddess, last night, he ran off just like that. No, it must've gotten lost. I've placed lots of chicken breast in its bowl, but it refuses to return to take a look.

…Klein's lips curved up and said, "I'm very satisfied with your description, Mrs. Doris."

"I accept this request. Alright, let's go to your home now. I need to search for clues and find traces. You should be clear that the basis of my reasoning lies in the details." Mrs. Doris didn't consult her grandson as she nodded and said, "You're the most proactive detective I've ever seen. It's a deal!"

Klein put on his coat and hat, picked up his cane, and followed Madam Doris and her grandson out onto the street.

Unlike Tingen, roads in many parts of Backlund had been rebuilt with cement or asphalt. Even during a downpour, the roads were less muddy.

While the old lady was leading the way, his grandson came close to Klein and said in a low voice, "I hope you'll do your best to find Brody. It's been one of the pillars of my grandmother's life ever since my grandfather and parents passed away."

"After Brody went missing, something went wrong with my grandmother's mind, so much so that she's started hearing things. She keeps telling me that she hears poor Brody mewing miserably."

Klein immediately nodded and said, "I'll do my best. Right, I still haven't gotten your name."

"Jurgen, Jurgen Cooper, a senior solicitor," the young man replied.

Soon, they reached 58 Minsk Street and entered the dark house.

"This is Brody's bowl. This is his favorite box. He always sleeps here." Doris's wrinkled face was filled with worry and expectation.

Klein squatted down and found several strands of black cat fur in the box.

He straightened up and gripped his silver-inlaid cane with the hand that held the cat's fur.

Klein's gaze turned deep as he pretended to observe his surroundings as he silently recited a divination sentence.

His hand secretly slipped from the end of the cane but didn't leave it completely. It just made it difficult for Jurgen or Doris to notice that the cane was standing on its own.

Soon after, the black silver-inlaid cane tilted to the side. It fell very slowly, with very little movement.

Klein gripped the cane again, looked in that direction, and observed it for more than ten seconds.

Then, he strode over to an old cupboard.

"Any signs of Brody running away?" Jurgen asked with concern. The old lady, Doris, was also waiting for an answer.

Without answering, Klein kneeled and pulled open the door at the bottom of the cupboard.

Meow!

A black cat darted out, tail high, and ran for its bowl.

"Brody… When did you get into the cupboard? How did you get locked in there?" Mrs. Doris cried, surprised and confused.

Jurgen turned his head in surprise and looked at Klein.

"How did you know it was in the cupboard?"

Klein smiled, and replied in a deep voice, "Inference, my good man."

…

After obtaining the 5 soli reward from Mrs. Doris and Jurgen, as well as their friendship, Klein returned to 15 Minsk Street under the gloomy weather.

Before he even got close, he saw a figure loitering in front of his door.

More business? When Klein looked over, he saw that the visitor was a boy of fifteen or sixteen, dressed in an old coat and a round hat that didn't fit his age.

It's him? Klein immediately recognized him as the boy he had met on the steam train the day he had arrived in Backlund. Back then, he was being pursued, but his maturity and calmness at the time had left quite a deep impression on Klein.

What would he want to entrust me with… As he wondered, Klein walked over and smiled.

"Excuse me, are you looking for me?"

The teenage boy was startled as he quickly turned around, his bright red eyes filled with unconcealable fear.

He composed himself and asked hesitantly, "Are you Detective Sherlock Moriarty?"

"Yes." Klein looked around and said, "Let's talk inside."

"Alright." The teenage boy didn't refuse.

Inside, Klein didn't take off his coat, but he did take off his hat and put his cane away.

He led the teenage boy to the guest area, pointed at the long sofa and said, "Please, have a seat. How might I address you? What job do you have for me?"

"You can call me Ian," the teenage boy surveyed his surroundings and fell silent for a few seconds. "I was previously hired by another detective, Mr. Zreal Viktor Lee, who helped me gather some news and information."

Klein sat down, clasped his hands, and said, "Does the job have anything to do with your former employer?"

"Yes," Ian nodded solemnly. "A few days ago I suddenly found myself being followed, by someone with ill intentions; therefore, I thought of a way to lose their tail… Uh… I believe you saw this scene yourself, Mr. Moriarty. I recognized you as the man who was sizing me up on the metro that day as soon as I saw you."

…This level of observational skills isn't any worse than a Spectator's… Could it be that he was born with a special ability? Or is he a Beyonder? Klein activated his Spirit Vision and looked at Ian, but he didn't find anything strange.

He nodded and calmly replied, "Your response left an impression on me."

Ian didn't harp on the topic and continued, "I suspect that my encounter has something to do with Mr. Zreal, so I went to visit him at his place. I found the place seemingly normal, but there were many hints that indicated that someone had infiltrated and triggered all the tiny mechanisms.

"I haven't seen Mr. Zreal since that day. I suspect that something has happened to him.

"I tried to call the police, but his disappearance period has yet to reach the required number of days to make the request. I tried to get help from other detectives that I knew, but all of them turned me down, on the grounds that they had just met Mr. Zreal at a fellow detective's party.

"That surprised me because I didn't receive any response from Mr. Zreal when I contacted him using the agreed upon method.

"I still stood by my judgment and intended to ask for the help of a detective whom Mr. Zreal doesn't know. Well, as such, that meant it would be someone I don't know either. I had no idea who to look for as well. Therefore, I could only search through the newspapers and ended up finding you, Mr. Sherlock Moriarty."

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CHAPTER 223
THREE MATTERS

Klein asked after listening carefully, "So you suspect that the Zreal whom the detectives saw was someone in disguise?"

Holding his brown round hat, Ian replied as if he had already thought about it, "It's a possibility, but I think it's too difficult due to the huge risks involved. The party was at night, and it's true that the lights weren't very bright*—*but most of the people attending are detectives, detectives with keen observational skills. Just a wig, beard, or cosmetics can hardly hide from their eyes."

Perhaps some Beyonder powers can do it… Just like how Creeping Hunger enables such an ability… There was a little trap in Klein's question. He wished to determine from the teenage boy's answer, the expression on his face, and his body language to determine if he had ever come into contact with Beyonders, or if he knew things about mysticism.

The initial answer was no.

When Ian saw Detective Moriarty nodding slightly in agreement with his reasoning, he continued, "I believe that the detectives saw Mr. Zreal, but he wasn't free. He was in a controlled state in which he couldn't send out distress signals. The reason why he wasn't responding to my attempts to liaison with him is to probably signal to me that he needs help."

"A reasonable explanation." Klein released his clasped hands and sat back a little, making himself look more relaxed and confident.

Ian fell silent for about ten seconds before he said seriously, "I'd like to entrust you with the task of investigating Mr. Zreal and determine his current condition. All I need is confirmation."

Considering that Ian was a semi-professional who had gathered intelligence and information for a detective, Klein had the intention to make his acquaintance. He smiled and said, "Then how much are you going to pay? You should be well aware that this may be very dangerous."

Ian looked down at the pocket of his old coat and said after some deliberation, "There are two ways. The first, I can directly give you a payment that's enough to satisfy you. Afterward, regardless of whether the mission is simple or difficult, that will be all unless you suffer a relatively serious injury.

"Secondly, I could pay you five pounds in advance, and when you finish the job, you can add on to the bill depending on the difficulty of the matter. But it's easy to cause a dispute, even if there's a contract."

Klein pretended to be in thought and after almost thirty seconds, he said in a low voice, "Why don't we do it this way? You can pay me five pounds in advance and help me with three things after the mission is completed. Don't worry, they won't be anything difficult. They will be within your capabilities, and it won't make you feel too uncomfortable. This can be agreed upon in the contract."

Ian knitted his brows before standing up. He leaned forward and stretched out his right hand.

"Alright!"

Klein shook hands with him, pulled out a standard contract that he had prepared, picked up a round fountain pen, added all the details he had discussed, and stamped it with his fingerprint.

After signing the contract, he gave the teenage boy, Ian, a stack of white paper and watched him write Detective Zreal's relevant information.

After a while, he browsed through the information and casually asked, "How can I contact you if there's an emergency, or if I've confirmed Zreal's condition?"

Ian pursed his lips and remained silent for quite a while. Only when Klein looked over did he reply in a somewhat stiff manner, "You don't need to contact me. I will appear at the right time."

Without another word, he took out a thick stack of cash from the pocket of his old coat. They seemed to be stacked up in a very neat order, from high face value to low face value.

Ian pulled out three one-pound notes from the bottom, counted six five-soli notes, and finally ten one-soli notes.

When Klein saw that Ian had neatly arranged the notes, with even the portraits of the former kings facing up without a single mistake, Klein suddenly felt a bit frustrated.

This is some late-stage obsessive-compulsive disorder… He silently exhaled and received the payment from Ian.

According to his visual estimate, Ian had less than three pounds left.

He probably had all his savings with him… If I had asked for more, would he bail on me without paying? He doesn't look like the kind of person to do so, but one shouldn't judge a book by its cover… Klein folded the bills at random and stuffed them into his pocket, ignoring the untidiness. As such, he succeeded in seeing Ian's slightly twisted expression.

"I'll try to complete the investigation as soon as possible." Klein stood up and held out his hand as a gesture of bidding him farewell.

"Thank you for your help." Ian thanked him sincerely because the counteroffer was obviously a "discount."

Watching the boy who was more mature than his age leave, Klein stroked his chin and silently said to himself, *This matter goes deeper than it seems.*

Ian didn't mention anything about Zreal's recent investigations or what information he had been instructed to gather…

Forget it. I'll handle as much as the money is worth. All I need to do is confirm Zreal's current condition.

He turned around and walked back into the living room. While doing so, he fished a quarter pence out of his trouser pocket.

Ping!

As the copper coin tumbled in the air, Klein's eyes turned dark as he muttered if there were any Beyonder elements in the case he was handling.

Then, he opened his right hand and tried to catch the copper penny.

Clang! The coin slipped from his fingertips and fell to the ground, rolling away.

This result meant that the divination had failed.

From the looks of it, Ian has withheld more things than I thought… The information is so lacking that I can't even obtain a vague divination result… He pursed his lips, took a few steps forward, and bent down to pick up the coin.

…

That night, in the wee hours of the morning, at 138 Rose Street, Backlund Bridge.

Klein had changed into a cheap light-blue workman's outfit. His mouth, chin, and cheeks were covered with a black beard that, at first glance, made him look rough and savage.

He wore a dark-colored cap and pressed it so low that it nearly covered his eyes.

Such caps originated from the Intis Republic hunters. There were certain differences from the traditional deer-hunting caps the Loen Kingdom hunters wore. However, such caps had become popular among the lower-class populace of Backlund.

Hiding in the shadows of an Intis parasol tree by the side of the road, Klein studied the house across the street with the aid of the elegant gas lamps.

It was Zreal's home.

The detective was from Southville. His parents, relatives, and friends were all there, and he had come to Backlund alone where he slowly forged a name for himself.

He was still a bachelor and had only hired two temporary maids, the kind that came by every three days to clean up the place, without needing to provide them with food or lodging.

At the moment, the terrace house he rented was pitch dark.

Klein took off the silver chain inside his sleeve and let the topaz pendant hang down naturally.

"There's danger inside.

"There's danger inside."

…

After repeating it seven times, he opened his eyes and saw the spirit pendulum spinning clockwise, but very slowly.

"There's danger, but it's nothing serious," Klein muttered, and once again confirmed that he had his tarot cards, self-made charms, and Holy Night Powder on him.

After doing all this, he looked around, and taking advantage of the stillness of the night, he nimbly rushed across the street.

There was no veranda, garden, or lawn as it directly faced the edge of the street. Klein went around to the side and easily climbed up the water pipe to the small balcony on the second floor where clothes could be hung out to dry.

Immediately following that, he took out a tarot card and slid it through the crack, opening the door to the corridor.

Following Ian's drawing of the house's layout, Klein walked almost soundlessly to Zreal's bedroom.

He lightly tapped his left molar and activated his Spirit Vision. Through the wooden door, he looked inside.

Spirit Vision could see aura colors through obstacles without spirituality. However, it was highly dependent on one's abilities. Currently, Klein was able to observe through wooden doors but was stumped by concrete walls. Furthermore, the scenes he could see weren't too clear.

In his vision, he saw three humanoid auras in the bedroom behind the door. The colors were blurry and were located in different locations.

There are three people lying in ambush… Is it to capture Ian, or someone else? The bedroom isn't that big… Klein stood in the darkness, calmly considering the results of his observations.

At that moment, he suddenly retreated towards the balcony while keeping his footsteps very light.

Back at the balcony, Klein took a thin silver slice from his pocket.

This was a Slumber Charm that he had created in an attempt during the afternoon.

He didn't pray to the Evernight Goddess, but to himself instead. He held a ritual in the name of "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era, the mysterious ruler above the gray fog; the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck" before entering the world above the gray fog to respond.

Since this method was difficult to mobilize the power of the mysterious space above the gray fog, Klein could only use his own spirituality to "respond." The charms that he made in the end were worse than normal, but better than the ones he made in his own name.

After surveying his surroundings again, Klein covered his mouth and whispered a word in ancient Hermes.

"Crimson."

Feeling the chill of the charm, he moved quickly but silently to the door of Zreal's bedroom again. As he held the handle, he injected spirituality into the thin silver slice.

Creak! Klein carefully twisted the handle and opened a tiny crack in the door.

Immediately after that, he threw the Slumber Charm inside.

Pulling back his arm, Klein closed the door again and began counting.

3

2

1

He abruptly pushed open the door and rolled on the ground.

Not sensing any movement from the three people, Klein stood up and, using the crimson moonlight shining through the window, began observing the room.

It was a normal furnished bedroom with a bed, a row of closets, a desk, a set of sofas, and a coat rack.

On the other side of the bed, a man in a black coat was sleeping soundly.

In addition to that, there was one person by the side of the sofa and another in front of the closet. All of them were asleep.

After confirming the trio's condition, Klein walked over to the bed and bent down to find a few short, yellowish-brown hair.

According to what Ian had written, Detective Zrell was a man with short, yellowish-brown hair.

"This should be right…" Klein whispered. He grabbed the few strands of hair and sat down on the sofa. He slowly sat in the darkness tainted by the crimson light and planned on using dream divination to find Zreal.

Leaning back against the back of the sofa, the corner of his mouth curled up as he made a self-deprecating comment, *Deduction, my good man…*

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CHAPTER 224 METAPHYSICS-STYLED DETECTIVE

The dim room was covered in a thin veil of crimson moonlight, and everything was indistinct.

The three men in the black coats were sleeping in different spots. And on the sofa, Klein's eyes half-blended into the darkness by closing them, it was as if he had entered a deep slumber.

His dream was a gray, distorted world, occasionally flashing with brilliance.

Finally, the brilliance settled to form a scene.

It was a gloomy corner, the ground sloshed with sewage. A man with short brown hair, a white shirt, and a brown vest was leaning against the wall, surrounded by a dense mischief of gray rats.

Half of the man's lips had been bitten off, revealing his yellowish teeth and rotten gums. His nose was only stained with blood, mixed with some short hairs, and the flesh on his face had disappeared, piece by piece, revealing white bone. White, fat maggots were crawling around everywhere, constantly squirming, and his throat seemed to have been the victim of some wild beast; at least half of it was missing.

Klein could just barely make out that this was Zreal Viktor Lee. It was nearly impossible to relate him to the mature and handsome man in the black-and-white photograph he had taken with Ian.

Zreal is already dead. In a few days, he would probably be gnawed to the point where he would only be bone. He might not even have a complete skeleton left… Klein left the dream and recalled what he had just seen.

His past experiences had allowed him to witness similar corpses more calmly.

Looking out of the window at the crimson moon, Klein thought for more than ten seconds and decided to try communicating with the soul of the man in black next to the sofa.

During the last few days of preparations, he had concocted a bottle of Amantha extract and Eye of the Spirit medication. As for Serenity Agent, Klein had no need for it. He was personally capable of invading the dreams of others and forcefully communicating with their souls while maintaining calm and rationale.

After setting up a simple altar and letting the quiet and tranquil fragrance waft out to create a half-dreaming state, Klein prayed to himself, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era."

Following that, he entered the world above the gray fog and used more than two-thirds of his spirituality to give a response.

*When I advance to Sequence 7, such prayers should also allow me to use a little of the power of the mysterious space above the gray fog, just like my summoning and bestowment rituals… *Looking around, Klein made a rough judgment and quickly returned to the real world.

He passed through what seemed like a starry sky and a chaotic storm of thoughts, entering the mental plane of the target. There, he saw the man's illusory figure floating in midair.

"Who sent you to Zreal's home?" Klein looked at him and asked in a deep voice.

The man replied in a daze, his illusory eyes vacant, "Meursault. Meursault sent me to wait for the boy named Ian."

The light in his spiritual world changed, revealing a lean, capable-looking, dark-skinned man. He was none other than the leader of the group who was chasing Ian on the steam train.

As expected, it's him… Klein, who had exhausted so much of his spirituality in responding to the prayer, was beginning to feel exhausted. He hurriedly asked, "Who ordered Meursault?"

"No idea… He's an 'executioner' of our Zmanger gang. No one can order him other than the boss," the man said, blankly.

Zmanger… The word "warrior" in the language of the highlanders… Klein, a pseudo-historian but a true mysticism scholar, suddenly felt a sharp pain in his head, and his body involuntarily flew out of the storm of thoughts.

Not long afterwards, he exited the mediumship and felt his head throbbing.

He was in no hurry to leave. He methodically packed up the materials and the short yellowish-brown hair before opening the oriel window to let in the cold night wind to disperse the smell of the Amantha extract and Eye of the Spirit medication.

While this happened, Klein returned to the balcony, locked the door from the inside, and wiped off all the places he had touched.

When Zreal's bedroom returned to its original state, he then held his hand to his chest and bowed towards the three men who were still sleeping soundly.

Straightening his back, Klein put on his gloves and leaped, nimbly flipping out of the oriel window. He stood firmly, tiptoeing in the abnormally tight space.

He raised the open window's vertical latch and used a tarot card to hold its bottom. With his Clown abilities, he took in the details and adjusted the balance.

After a few seconds, Klein slowly pulled back the tarot card, and the vertical latch suddenly stopped in place and didn't fall further.

Whoosh!

First, he closed the unlatched half of the window, then he jumped over to the window with a latch. His right hand jerked inward, closing the other half of the window.

The speed of the action was so quick that the latch didn't fall down until there was a vibration, accurately inserting itself into the matching hole.

*Clang! *A sound that was difficult to eliminate rang out, like a strong wind slamming onto the surface of the glass.

Klein knew that the three men in the bedroom were about to awaken. Without further ado, he jumped onto the street.

For the current him, the height from the second floor wouldn't pose any danger. It was just that he couldn't maintain his silence when he landed, so he didn't make any obvious noises.

Klein quickly left the vicinity, as well as Rose Street, but he didn't directly take a rental carriage back to Cherwood Borough's Minsk Street.

He turned a few corners and headed to the neighboring East Borough.

It was a cold night, and the wind sent a biting chill right into his bones. Klein shivered and decided that he would need an additional sweater for his future missions. He decided to buy charcoal on one of the following days and let the fireplace carry out its role.

After an unknown period of time, he entered Backlund's East Borough despite not having a map. He had completely relied on instinct.

There were only a few gas lamps to be seen in the distance, and if it wasn't for the fact that the dark clouds hadn't covered the crimson moon, Klein believed that many parts of the road would be pitch black.

As he was walking, he suddenly saw pairs of eyes appear in the deep darkness in front of him. They came stooping from a distance.

They sauntered over from a vague distance away, in silence.

Living corpses? Klein came to a sudden halt. He reached out for his Requiem Charm and tarot cards, and he quickly activated his Spirit Vision.

He saw the unhealthy and weak colored auras and saw the faces of the numerous figures.

These were all living people, normal living people with numbed expressions, vacant eyes, and weak movements. There were both men and women.

It's almost midnight; why are they still walking on the streets… Confused, Klein warily leaned to one side, passing the group on the sidewalk, but soon, he came across a second wave, a third wave; all of them had the same pain amidst numbness.

He frowned slightly, and just as he was about to move forward to inquire, he suddenly heard a shout ahead.

"Get up! All of you get up!

"You sons of bitches!

"The streets and parks aren't for people like you to sleep in!"

…Klein was startled, then the corresponding term "Poor Law" popped up in his mind, and he understood what was going on.

He had experienced the same thing himself.

Phew… Klein exhaled, picked up the pace, and headed for his one-bedroom house on Black Palm Street in the East Borough.

There, he slept for two hours. After recovering some of his spirituality, he went out again and broke a withered branch to serve as a "dowsing rod."

"The location of Zreal's corpse.

"The location of Zreal's corpse."

…

After repeated divinations, Klein walked for a long time with the help of the short yellowish-brown hair until he arrived at a corner of East Borough where there was a sewer entrance.

Twelve years ago, after the great plague, the Loen Kingdom gradually built up an advanced sewer system in the capital and, in one fell swoop, surpassed "Roselle's Heritage" of the Intis Republic.

Moving the manhole cover out the way, Klein held his breath and climbed down the vertical metal stairs.

Since his clothes weren't specially made, he was unable to bring too many items due of the lack of pockets. He hadn't brought Quelaag's Oil which he had learned about from Frye. Klein felt especially regretful for not having brought the refreshing and odor-dispelling Quelaag's Oil.

Ten seconds later, Klein's feet touched the sticky ground.

The feeling of filth caused fine goosebumps to pop up over his arms and body. However, he could only endure it and continue walking forward, venturing deeper into the empty and quiet sewer.

There was a fork in the road ahead, one which was relatively hidden. A thick pungent smell wafted over from there.

Klein turned around and walked to the end where he saw a dense number of spirituality light dots and aura colors.

Without needing to use a candle, he activated his Spirit Vision and directly saw that in the dark corner, there was a rotten corpse that had been bitten to pieces.

This was the exact same scene he had seen in the dream divination.

Squeak!

The densely packed gray rats scampered in every direction, but there were also some who stayed where they were, unwilling to leave and part with their food.

After confirming that it was Zreal, Klein hesitated for a moment before quickly setting up a mediumship ritual.

Hmm… If there's nothing wrong with Ian's description, and Zreal died only a few days ago, I should be able to get some rough information by channeling his spirit… he thought confidently.

Whoosh!

As the wind swirled and the wall of spirituality was set up, all the rats fled, and Klein proceeded with his ritual as he had done before.

"The cause of Zreal's death.

"The cause of Zreal's death."

…

As he recited the words, Klein's eyes turned black. His pupils and the whites of his eyes disappeared. He quickly used Cogitation to enter a dream.

However, nothing appeared in that misty, illusory world.

Klein opened his eyes, frowning slightly as he made his judgment.

The channeling failed…

Someone has dealt with Zreal's spirit…

A Beyonder was involved in this.

The fact that someone was able to disguise as Zreal, making the other detectives unable to see through him, also proves this point.

After some deliberation, Klein came to a decision; it was to end this matter here and not get involved any further. Regardless, he had fulfilled the requirements of the job that he was entrusted with.

"I'll get Ian to call the police," he muttered as he put away the materials and removed the wall of spirituality.

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CHAPTER 225
UNNOTICEABLE GUIDANCE

Klein backed up from the fork in the path, without touching Zreal's corpse.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

Suddenly, a sound echoed in the distance through the empty sewers.

Klein listened for a few seconds before decisively retreating towards the exit, down the dirty concrete road that ran along both sides of the sewage channel.

There was no need to take risks in matters that didn't involve him.

Klein closed the iron manhole cover after he climbed out of the sewers. After ensuring that the surrounding area looked normal, he returned to his rented room in the East Borough and changed out of his disguise.

Then, he put on his gold-rimmed glasses, walked to another street, took a rented carriage, and returned to Cherwood Borough in the silence and cold of three in the morning. However, he didn't return to Minsk Street.

Then, Klein made another huge detour, and only after confirming that no one was following him, did he enter his house. He slept till dawn and was woken up by the doorbell.

He sat up immediately, put on his shirt, buttoned his vest, and hurried down to the first floor to open the door.

And even before that, his premonition ability as a Clown was already capable of naturally forming the image of the visitor in his mind.

The visitor was wearing an old coat, a brown round hat, and a tattered satchel. He had bright red eyes, a delicate face, and a quiet temperament. It was none other than Ian, the teenage boy who had come to entrust him with a job yesterday.

"Good morning, Detective Moriarty," Ian greeted him and looked around. "Any progress? Yeah… I'm only asking because I happened to pass by."

Klein nodded seriously and said, "Yes."

"…” Ian seemed shocked as he didn't say a word for quite a while.

After a while, he stammered in surprise, "Have you determined Mr. Zreal's condition?"

"Yes." Klein paused for a moment, then said seriously, "I found Zreal's corpse."

"Corpse…” Ian's pupils shrank as he repeated it in a low tone.

He wasn't too surprised, as if he had already expected the worst possible outcome.

Klein watched silently without interjecting.

"Sigh…” Ian exhaled and warily surveyed his surroundings. "Your efficiency is amazing. Can you take me to see Mr. Zreal's body?"

"No problem. In fact, that's what I was planning to do." Klein then thought for a moment before saying, "I hope you won't mention me when you call the police. Just say that you found the corpse yourself. I believe you know how to make up a reason."

Ian wasn't surprised; he knew that not every detective liked to deal with the police. In fact, except for the very famous detectives, who often gave advice to the police with mutual cooperation, the rest were discriminated against, ostracized, and even extorted from.

This was the current situation of the Loen Kingdom.

"Alright," Ian readily agreed.

Considering that they were entering the sewers, Klein changed into a set of clothes worn by the common working class, put on a deer-hunting cap, and took a lantern with him.

Both of them took the public carriage to the East Borough. They walked for half an hour to reach the remote sewer entrance under the watchful gazes filled with numbness and malicious intent.

"How did you find it?" Ian asked, half-surprised and half-curious, as he watched Klein lift the manhole cover and climb down.

Klein focused on the area beneath him and answered casually, "Skillful training which includes many techniques in reasoning, investigation, tracking, and interrogation."

Ian followed him into the sewers. He nodded without looking disgusted.

“…You seem to have received very professional training."

Klein didn't answer him directly. He held the already lit lantern and led Ian to the fork in the path where they arrived at the gloomy corner.

He narrowed his eyes as he approached. More of Zreal's body was missing now when compared to the previous night. He was missing an arm and half of his ribs.

That's not something a rat can do… Klein muttered to himself and didn't inform Ian of this.

With the help of the lantern's light, Ian was able to clearly see the corpse's appearance.

He squatted down suddenly, vomited, and gradually vomited yellow-green bile. Klein took out the Quelaag's Oil he prepared, unscrewed the cap, and bent over to place the mouth close to Ian's nose.

Ian's eyes lit up, and he calmed down.

Nearly twenty seconds later, he weakly whispered, "Thank you…”

He stood up slowly and examined the mutilated corpse a few more times.

"I can confirm that this is Detective Zrell."

"My condolences," Klein replied out of politeness. "I suggest you call the police."

"Okay." Ian nodded indiscernibly as he followed Klein back to the surface.

At that moment, Klein clapped his hands.

"This is the end of my mission. As for what should be done after this, that is up to you."

Ian fell silent for a few seconds.

"I still owe you three matters. You can tell me now."

"Actually, I can only think of one at the moment," Klein answered frankly. "I want to know where I can get a gun and bullets, without needing a full class weapon permit."

Ian spoke, almost without thinking, "Go to Bravehearts Bar at Iron Gate Street in the Backlund Bridge district. Find Kaspars Kalinin. Tell him 'Old Geezer' introduced you."

"Alright, let's talk about the other two matters in the future. I have a feeling that we'll meet again." Klein deliberately nodded casually.

Ian gave him a look but didn't say anything.

The two split up and headed down different streets in the East Borough. The secluded spot, once again, regained its silence.

After walking for a while, Klein suddenly turned around and retraced his steps. He then hid himself in a secluded corner, peeking at the entrance to the sewer.

After waiting for two or three minutes, he saw Ian return silently as he looked around warily.

Klein withdrew his gaze in a timely manner, leaned his back against the wall, and listened.

He heard the scraping sound of the manhole cover being removed and heard someone climbing down.

Carefully poking his head out, Klein discovered that Ian had re-entered the sewers.

Was there a clue or something on Zreal's body? Indeed, this matter goes deeper than it seems… He nodded thoughtfully.

Having satisfied his curiosity, Klein decided to leave for real and planned to seek out Kaspars, two days later.

…

At tea time, Viscount Glaint was in his home situated in Empress Borough.

The door to the study was tightly shut, separating the four people inside from the participating guests in the salon outside.

"Xio, Fors, this is the reward the two of you deserve." Dressed in a pale yellow lace dress, Audrey pushed a bulging envelope across the desk to the two ladies sitting opposite her.

Xio wanted to say something polite, but her hand had reached for the envelope faster than her mouth. Feeling the weight of the money, she could only say sincerely, "Miss Audrey, thank you for your generosity. Your honesty makes you look even more beautiful."

As she spoke, she untied the thin string around the envelope and saw the bills inside.

It was uniform gray paper money with black stripes. The stack was thick and exuded a special smell of ink, one that left one feeling refreshed.

"10 pounds…" Xio took one note out and checked its face value. Beside her, Fors, who appeared lazy and unbothered by money, had also leaned over.

This is at least… Observing the thickness, Xio tried to figure out how many notes there were.

She couldn't help but exchange looks with Fors and saw the surprise in each other's eyes.

This was obviously a lot more than they had imagined!

Audrey smiled faintly and said, "A total of eight hundred pounds. Decide how you will split the money between the two of you.

"I'm very sorry that this matter had placed you in danger."

*Eight hundred pounds… No, there's no need to apologize. Even if we had to do it again and knew of the possible consequences, I would still accept the request… Even if it's divided evenly, with my savings, it's enough to buy the potion formula for Sheriff… *Xio, who was slightly taller than 150cm, stared blankly at the notes in the envelope, wishing she could pull them all out and count them over and over again.

She believed that the generous and beautiful Miss Audrey wouldn't pay them any less, but what if she had made a mistake counting?

Everyone makes mistakes at times! Xio raised her right hand, paused for a few seconds, then silently lowered it.

The corners of Fors's lips couldn't help but rise as she said wistfully, "This is even more than the royalties I've received for my 'Stormwind Mountain Villa' so far…"

Should I praise Miss Audrey or laugh at the poverty of an author? She added silently.

Viscount Glaint, who was sitting on the sofa, was also a little envious, but it wasn't directed at Xio or Fors. As a viscount with a fairly good financial situation, 800 pounds wasn't a large sum.

What he envied was Audrey's ability to hand out money without feeling the slightest burden.

"Ahem…" Viscount Glaint cleared his throat, "If you can get the formula for Apothecary, I will also provide you with substantial payment."

"We'll do our best!" Xio answered without any hesitation. Then, she looked at Audrey. "We've recently come into contact with someone who's suspected to be from the Psychology Alchemists, and we'll soon have clues regarding the Spectator potion you're looking for."

Xio, I'm already at Sequence 8; far stronger than you… Audrey smiled in a reserved manner as she said, "I'm looking forward to it."

With that said, the four began chatting about various rumors among the Beyonder circles while following Audrey's example of finding books they wished to read.

Suddenly, Xio's eyes lit up as she saw two hardcover books.

"History of the Loen Kingdom's Aristocracy" and "Study of the Coat of Arms"

Meanwhile, Fors also found books that interested her.

"Geography and People of the Feysac Empire" and "Traveling the Northern Continent"

"Honorable Viscount Glaint, may I borrow these two books? I'll return them soon." Xio looked pleadingly at the owner of the study.

Glaint nodded without much care.

"No problem.

At his response, Fors hurriedly made a request as well and similarly obtained his approval.

The corners of Audrey's mouth curved into a faint smile as she witnessed all of this. She looked modestly to the side, pretending to be looking for a book.

As a qualified Spectator who had just advanced, she had accurately grasped Xio's and Fors's preferences in certain domains after being in contact with them multiple times. Thus, she had made arrangements in advance without anyone realizing it.

Letting the one being guided feel like it was done out of their own will was a manifestation of the powers of a Spectator.

…

In the evening, Xio was curled up on the sofa in front of the fireplace, reading History of the Loen Kingdom's Aristocracy under the gas lamp's illumination. Fors had gone for a gathering meant for authors.

After reading for quite a while, Xio suddenly felt something strange about the hardback cover, so she carefully examined it and found an interlayer where an ancient piece of paper was hidden inside.

The front side of the paper was covered with the special symbols created by Emperor Roselle, and on the back was a paragraph written in ancient Hermes.

"Viscount Glaint's ancestors deciphered some of Emperor Roselle's special symbols?" Xio was suddenly excited.

She struggled to decipher the ancient Hermes as she muttered silently

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era.

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog.

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

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CHAPTER 226
THE TERRIFIED XIO

Cherwood Borough. 15 Minsk Street.

A satiated Klein sat in a reclining chair in the living room, beside a fireplace burning with charcoal.

In a warm environment akin to summer, Klein wore a white shirt, a black vest, and thin trousers, while having a newspaper spread open in front of him as he flipped through the section with the most ads.

A new type of transportation vehicle is in urgent need for investments. Details to be discussed in person… Klein read the advertisement twice before picking up a pencil from a small, dark red table to his side and circled the message.

If there were no commissions tomorrow or the day after, he planned on seeing if this so-called new type of transportation vehicle had any investment value—such matters were impossible to divine since there was a lack of sufficient information.

*I hope it's a product similar to a bicycle… *Klein mumbled to himself before suddenly hearing an illusory prayer echo in his ears.

Who is it? Miss Justice? Mr. Hanged Man? The Sun? Or some clerk at the Backlund Bank is copying my passcode? Thoughts flashed through Klein's mind as he put down the newspaper, returned to his bedroom, and locked the door behind him.

Taking four steps counterclockwise, he entered the world above the gray fog. He saw that to the side of The Fool's seat and by the edge of the ancient mottled bronze table was a clear and bright brilliance that emitted waves of radiance.

The experienced Klein calmly sat down and emanated his spirituality, touching the light ripples of light in response to the prayer.

The scene in front of his eyes suddenly changed. It was a blurry sofa with a petite woman in a knight's trainee uniform curled up on it.

She's not copying my passcode… She's reading a piece of paper… Klein suddenly realized the reason for this.

She should be one of the two Beyonders that Miss Justice mentioned that requires my vetting…

After nearly twenty seconds of silence, Klein didn't give any form of formal response. He planned on taking the next step deep at night. He would then test her reaction, attitude, and way of handling things to test her personality and abilities.

Of course, he would absolutely not force others to join the Tarot Club.

…

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era…" Xio, who had just finished chanting the ancient Hermes sentence, froze for a few seconds. Then, she suddenly straightened her back and sat up straight.

This seems to be the honorary name of a hidden existence! She realized this in horror.

Furthermore, her knowledge in mysticism and the various rumors she had heard told her that once someone recited the full honorary name of a hidden existence, it would often attract the attention of said existence!

The consequences of such attention was mostly misfortune or could even be described as tragic!

Quite a few of those hidden beings were the incarnations of the evil gods and devils!

Furthermore, I recited it in ancient Hermes, completely unprotected… I'm so dumb. Why did I focus so much effort in identifying the sentence and actually read it in my head… Xio looked around in horror, terrified that an indescribable monster would suddenly appear in her house.

The sofa, tea table, cupboard, dining table, chairs, oil painting, and other items were all reflected in her eyes, without any changes.

After nearly a minute of heightened vigilance, Xio relaxed a little and comforted herself, "Don't worry, don't be afraid. I just said the honorable name and didn't follow up with a prayer.

"This is an incomplete ceremony, so it shouldn't attract any attention.

"Moreover, there's a good chance that the name might've been translated by the owner of the paper based on the special symbols left behind by Emperor Roselle. It might not be correct."

But, but I heard that if the evil gods and devils generate interest, they would still provide a response even if the ceremony is incomplete… I'm so stupid, really… As she thought over the matter, Xio's face scrunched up into a grimace. She felt that she had made a grave mistake.

After waiting for a few more minutes, she slowly exhaled as she puffed out her cheeks when she realized that there was no obvious response.

She stuffed the piece of paper back into the "History of the Loen Kingdom's Aristocracy" as she entered the bathroom with a heavy heart. She turned on the faucet and tried to use the cold water to clear her head.

Splash!

As nearly transparent water flowed down, Xio hunched her back and reached out her palms to cup some water.

Just as she was about to dab the cold water onto her face, she spotted a long, slightly curly brown hair in the mirror through the corner of her eye.

As for her, she had shoulder-length, unkempt yellow hair.

Suddenly, Xio's hair stood on end.

She stomped on the ground and, with a push of her hands, she shot backwards, turning her body halfway around and slamming the entity with her elbow.

Pow!

She leaned against a warm body, causing the other party to let out a familiar scream before falling to the ground.

Xio stopped any subsequent actions and looked at her good friend who was hugging her stomach in pain, tears in her eyes.

The corner of her mouth twitched without her realizing it as she said, "Fors, when did you get back?"

Fors didn't reply immediately. It took her quite a while to get over the pain. As she slowly stood up, using the wall as a support, she grumbled, "I j-just got back. Xio, are you nuts!? Why did you attack me without even looking clearly! And you hit me so hard!"

"Where did you come in from?" Xio asked awkwardly.

"Through the bathroom window. Why? Is there a problem? As an Apprentice, it's normal to not bring a key with me," Fors replied matter-of-

factly.

Xio straightened her back and pushed away all responsibility.

"Then why didn't you go through the door? You really gave me a fright just now!"

Fors blinked her eyes and said, "If that's the case, I'll have to make one big round. That's too troublesome; I'm used to walking in a straight line."

She paused as she asked suspiciously, "However, wasn't your reaction a bit too much?"

Xio struggled for three seconds, choosing between losing her dignity or losing her life, before answering honestly, "It-it's because I made a mistake, a fatal mistake."

"What mistake?" Fors asked, rubbing her belly as she felt puzzled and concerned.

Xio hurriedly recounted the whole story of how she had discovered the interlayer in the book's cover and found an old piece of paper in it. Then, she had accidentally recited the suspected incantation in ancient Hermes silently. What she had recited seemed to contain the honorable name of some hidden existence.

"You… Where's your brain? It-it should be fine. The ceremony wasn't complete, and who knows if it's real or fake…" Fors looked around, and for some baffling reason, she felt a chill.

She followed Xio back to the living room and saw the yellowed sheet of paper, as well as Roselle's special symbols, and the sentence that was written in ancient Hermes.

After a quick glance, Fors, the professional researcher in mysticism, nodded and said, "It's not any of the evil gods, devils, and secret existences that I

know of. It should be fine.

"Furthermore, nothing has happened up till now. That means that everything should be fine."

Seeing Xio relax, she thought of the pain in her stomach, so she deliberately added maliciously, "Of course, if something were to really happen, there's no way we can rescue ourselves with our meager abilities."

Xio's face paled as she blurted out, "Fors, let's sleep together tonight. Forget it, I'll just sleep on my own…"

Fors pricked up her brows and chuckled, "Alright. In fact, you don't have to worry about it. Think about it, I hear strange murmurs whenever there's a full moon, but I don't see any signs me going mad or losing control.

"Well… We should study the other three books. If there's the same piece of paper and the same incantation, it means that it's very likely to be a prank from Viscount Glaint."

The duo hurriedly flipped through "Study of the Coat of Arms" and the other books and checked them carefully, but they didn't find anything else out of the ordinary.

Xio looked at Fors, who looked back at her, turning the mood somber again.

"Should we sneak into Saint Samuel Cathedral's nave tonight?" Xio came up with an inspired suggestion.

That was the headquarters of the Church of the Evernight Goddess in the Backlund diocese.

"Why not Saint Hierländ Cathedral? I don't think the Evernight Goddess will protect me…" Fors subconsciously replied.

That was the headquarters of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, which was located in the St. George Borough, adjacent to many huge factories in the southeast.

The two ladies with different faiths fell silent again, and after a while, Fors sighed and said, "And that would make us end up being targeted by the Nighthawks or the Machinery Hivemind. That might be the goal of that hidden existence.

"Alright, go to sleep. We'll know the answer tomorrow morning. If nothing happens by then, it means that it'll really be okay."

…

In the middle of the night, the waxing crimson moon was obscured by clouds, and the stars were barely visible in the sky above Backlund.

Klein instinctively woke up, lifted his blanket, got off the bed, and entered the world above the gray fog.

He sat down on the high back chair that belonged to The Fool. He planned on responding to Miss Justice's companion and proceed with the 'examination process.'

At that moment, he suddenly had a new idea.

Perhaps he could try and see if he could pull her into the world above the gray fog under the present circumstances!

The young lady must have fallen asleep, and even if I succeed, she would probably treat it as a dream that appears clearer than usual… Hmm… If I succeed, I can sever the connection in a timely manner to prevent her from seeing her surroundings clearly…

After repeatedly deliberating over the matter, Klein stretched out his hand and tapped at the rippling ring of light to form a connection with it.

Suddenly, Klein felt his spirituality surge out in an unstoppable manner, causing the mysterious space above the gray fog to tremble slightly.

Just when Klein thought that his spirituality would be completely drained, everything calmed down. A blurry, distorted figure appeared at the edge of the long bronze table.

In her reverie, Xio opened her eyes sleepily and saw the endless fog, the ancient high back chair, and a dark figure watching her.

Klein was overjoyed and immediately severed the connection according to his plan.

The hazy, petite figure disappeared, but within the grayish-white mist, a crimson, illusory star appeared.

Klein looked at this scene and confirmed one thing. As long as someone chanted his name, he would be able to pull that person into the world above the gray fog. The crimson star was a symbol of a stable connection.

However, there are certain limitations. With my current strength, at most, I can establish another connection… Hmm… Based on my previous experiences, my current spirituality can only pull in Beyonders who are a Sequence higher than me, and it won't necessarily be a success. It's just a preliminary judgment, so it shouldn't be a problem if it's someone at the same Sequence as me or lower… Klein thought, feeling satisfied.

There was no need for him to respond. His attempt was already enough.

…

Xio sat up in her sleep.

She had been worrying about the potential dangers of chanting an honorary name the entire time. Not long after she fell asleep, she dreamed of a mysterious space, and a gray foggy figure looking down on her from above.

The dream was so clear, so clear that Xio felt afraid.

She looked at the sleeping Fors beside her and thought with a tremble, *Is it a nightmare caused by fear, or is it because of the attention I garnered from some hidden existence, resulting in being haunted by evil spirits?*

Yes… There's going to be a gathering of Beyonders tomorrow night. In addition to buying the formula, I need to find a person who is good at exorcising evil spirits to purify myself.

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CHAPTER 227
INVENTOR LEPPARD

Sitting at his own dining table on a foggy morning, Klein broke up his specially bought wheat bread and soaked it in milk, improving the way he ate it.

Although his body had changed a long time ago, his pursuit and obsession with delicacies were engraved into his soul. He was completely unable to adapt to the Loen Kingdom's monotonous and repetitive style of breakfast. He could only try his best at experimenting. He tried not to limit himself to toast, bread, bacon, sausages, and butter. He tried hard to expand the boundaries and improve the way he ate. For example, his recipes had new additions such as pork-filled pastries from the south, Feynapotter noodles, and roasted corn pastries.

"Caviar from the Feysac Empire isn't bad either, but it's too expensive. It's only suitable for formal meals…" Klein scooped up a small piece of wheat bread he had softened and put it in his mouth. Just by chewing it a little, he could feel the intertwining flavors of milk with the fragrance of wheat. The aftertaste of the bread was even sweeter.

After breakfast, Klein put down his cutlery, but he was in no hurry to tidy up the table. He picked up the newspapers, and began to read.

I'll do a divination in a while. If there's nothing else to do, I'll pay Mr. Leppard a visit at St. George Borough's Sird Street and see if his new transportation vehicle is worth investing in… Backlund is really big. Every borough is almost the size of Tingen City. The East Borough is especially ridiculous. It's at least twice as large… The easiest and most economical

way to travel is to walk, followed by the steam metro, before walking again. It's just quite a waste of time… Klein's mind wandered aimlessly.

Backlund's public horse carriage system was rather similar to Tingen's. The price was about the same, but the only problem was that most of them were confined to a single borough. If one wanted to go from Cherwood to St. George, a few transfers were needed and that would naturally raise the price.

Such a situation made the prospects for a new transportation vehicle very alluring.

Knock! Knock! Knock!

At that moment, knocks on the door sounded. It was as loud as the pounding of a hammer.

Who is it… Don't they know how to ring the doorbell… He muttered a few words, straightened his collar, walked to the door, and pulled it open.

In front of him was a familiar face. It was the highlander man who had chased Ian at the steam metro. His skin was dark, his eye sockets recessed, and he was lean and hardy man.

According to Klein's mediumship results, the man's name was Meursault, an "executioner" of the Zmanger gang who was almost equal to the boss.

"Excuse me, who are you looking for? Do you have a commission to entrust with me?" Klein deliberately acted somewhat confused.

Meursault was wearing a black coat and a pompous silk hat, but he didn't look anything like a gentleman at all.

He coldly sized Klein up, then he asked in Loen, with a thick highlander accent, "Are you Detective Sherlock Moriarty?"

"Yes," Klein replied short and sweet.

Meursault nodded his head stiffly.

"I want to hire you to find someone."

"We can talk about the exact situation inside." Klein prevented himself from acting odd in any way.

Meursault shook his head coldly.

"There's no need."

After saying that, his eyes suddenly became sharp.

"The person I'm looking for is called Ian. Ian Wright. He has a pair of bright red eyes, maybe fifteen or sixteen. He likes to wear a brown, old coat and a round hat of the same color. I believe you know him."

Klein let out a soft chuckle.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

Meursault seemed to ignore Klein's denial. "He's a thief who has stolen an important item from me. If you can find him, you'll be paid at least 10 pounds."

"You've provided too few clues." Klein made up an excuse.

"30 pounds." Meursault made a new offer.

Klein glanced at him and said, "No, this is against my principle of confidentiality."

"50 pounds," Meursault replied coldly.

“…I'm sorry, I cannot accept the mission." Klein was startled for two seconds, but in the end, he still chose to reject the request.

Meursault studied him slowly for a few seconds as his eyes slowly turned cold and fierce.

He didn't offer a new price, nor did he politely bid farewell. He turned around abruptly and walked quickly to the end of the street.

This gang has pretty good intelligence… They actually know that Ian had come to me once… Klein secretly sighed, full of emotion, but he didn't feel too much anxiety or fear.

After all, I'm someone who once directly faced the son of an evil god, although, it was separated by a belly… As he thought about it, his smile suddenly became brilliant. He began flipping a coin to decide whether or not he was going out today.

The answer was positive.

…

St. George Borough, Sird Street.

Having transferred from a tracked public carriage to the steam metro, before transferring to a trackless carriage, Klein finally arrived at his destination, spending a total of 11 pence.

Just after he alighted the carriage, he discovered that a drizzle had already started, but he hadn't brought an umbrella.

According to the newspapers and magazines, this is a daily occurrence in Backlund. The reason why hats are popular is that ladies and gentlemen don't carry umbrellas all the time. Klein pressed down on his half top hat and briskly ran outside Unit 9 and used the eaves to shield himself from the rain.

He brushed off the obvious water droplets from his body and rang the doorbell.

However, he didn't hear any cuckoo sounds or tinkling sounds.

Is the doorbell broken? Klein was just about to raise his hand to knock when he suddenly saw footsteps approaching from afar.

The image of the person naturally appeared in his mind. It was a tall, thin man with black hair and blue eyes. He was in his thirties and was dressed in grayish-blue worker attire, but he appeared gentle and refined.

Creak. The door opened. The gentleman rubbed his forehead and asked, "May I know who you are looking for? Is there something?"

Klein took off his hat and bowed slightly.

"I'm here to find Mr. Leppard. I'm interested in his new transportation vehicle."

The gentleman's eyes suddenly lit up.

"I'm Leppard. Come in, please."

He turned to the side and allowed Klein entry. However, there was no coat rack in the foyer.

Klein could only lean his cane and not take off his coat. He followed Leppard into the living room.

It had to be said that the gentleman's house was very messy. On the coffee table in the living room alone were many mechanical objects, such as wrenches, bearings and screwdrivers.

"How much do you wish to invest? Ah, right. Would you like some coffee or black tea? Uh… it seems I'm out of black tea…" Leppard blurted out.

This gentleman is a bit straightforward, and doesn't seem to be very good at interpersonal relationships… A thought flashed through Klein's mind, and he changed the words he planned on saying. He went straight to the point, "I've to see your new transportation vehicle before I make a decision.

"I can't make any promises without understanding anything."

As he spoke, he looked around and saw a triangular Sacred Emblem hanging on the wall.

That was the symbol of the God of Steam and Machinery. The solid triangle was filled with symbols such as steam, gears, and levers.

Leppard wasn't irritated by Klein's straightforwardness. He immediately said, "I'll show you."

As soon as he said that, he slapped his head. "I almost forgot, we have to sign a non-disclosure agreement to ensure that you don't steal my invention."

Mr. Leppard, you don't have a very good memory either… Klein smiled and said, "That wouldn't be an issue."

After signing the simple contract, Leppard led Klein into a room that seemed like an activity room. He had knocked through the neighboring guest room and basement, making it much wider and spacious.

The ground was littered with components, and a rough object, that was half the height of a man, that resembled a carriage stood in the center.

In addition to that, the line of the doorbell was connected there and was cleverly constructed. As long as someone pulled the rope, a steel ball would pop out from the mechanism, allowing it to roll along a special track before colliding with the object in the center to produce a clanging sound.

The sound certainly wasn't too loud, but it was enough to rouse Leppard who was engrossed in machinery.

"Is that the new form of transportation you invented?" Klein pointed to the crude object in the middle of the room.

"Yes, I invented it based on Emperor Roselle's imagination!" He replied with a fervent look in his eyes.

"Emperor Roselle's imagination?" Klein asked in surprise.

Leppard explained in a tone of adoration, "Emperor Roselle left behind a number of manuscripts in which he drew his vision of the machines of the future. He was an outstanding genius, no—a master! Many things have already been turned into reality! "Heh heh, this manuscript is kept in the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. There's no way for non pious believers to borrow them."

…Emperor, are you still leaving no stones unturned for others… Klein's mouth twitched, almost unable to maintain his smile.

"Describe it in detail." He changed the subject.

Leppard led Klein to the crude metallic object and opened the door.

"This is a transportation tool that doesn't need a horse.

"The driver sits in the front left seat, continuously stepping on the pedals. Through the levers and a chain connects to the four wheels, allowing the vehicle to roll forward. And on the wheels, I used inflated rubber which can make the journey smooth."

So it's a human-powered car? Klein couldn't help but lampoon.

He said with some deliberation, "With such a huge carriage, and at least four passengers, it would be impossible to travel that far just by relying on

human strength alone."

"That's exactly my next goal—to reduce the weight and expand the lever a few times! However, my financial situation isn't at its best. I can't fund any more attempts." Leppard looked hopefully at Klein.

"Why not consider other methods? Such as using steam as the driving force?" Klein slowly organized his words.

Leppard shook his head. "There have been people who have invented that, but it has a very huge body, making it difficult to drive it along many streets."

That was exactly what Klein was waiting for.

"Then, why don't you just do something simpler? For example, have only two wheels with only one person without an outer shell."

"You mean something like a bicycle?" Leppard asked in thought.

Roselle's manuscript has that? Klein nodded heavily.

"Yes."

"Those bicycles which other people have invented aren't very practical… Simplifying this… seems like it might work. It will really seem different. But, who would buy it?" Leppard said to himself.

Klein didn't hesitate to provide him with a direction.

"The postman, the working class who have a bit of savings, the businessmen who doesn't need to look respectable while hoping to save money… There are many of them in Backlund."

Leppard thought for a moment, then nodded slightly.

“…I can try, but I don't have the money for spare parts…”

"I'll invest 100 gold pounds. In addition to my suggestion just now, I'll take a total of…” Klein hesitated to say ten percent of the shares. Fifteen percent was better. After all, a hundred pounds was, strictly speaking, not much.

"You can have 35% of the shares! But that's only limited to the bicycle concept you described!" Leppard spoke out first, afraid that Klein would make an unreasonable request.

"Deal!" Klein immediately laughed. "We'll first draw up a simple contract and settle this matter. Afterwards, I'll find a lawyer to make a formal contract and add some detailed terms. For example, if there's anyone else who wants to invest, they must first get my consent."

"No problem," Leppard replied impatiently. All he wanted was to buy his spare parts as soon as possible.

…

In the gloominess brought about by the drizzle, Klein returned to Cherwood Borough's Minsk Street.

He entered the house and went straight to the bathroom on the first floor and resolved the problem of his bloated stomach.

Splash.

As the water echoed, Klein bent down to wash his hands.

At that moment, an image appeared in his mind.

The mirror in front of the sink reflected his lowered head, dim surroundings, and a pair of eyes to his side.

A pair of eyes!

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CHAPTER 228
THE MASTERMIND

Almost instinctively, Klein bent his knees and rolled sideways toward the bathroom door.

Sou!

A small black-feathered arrow stabbed into the wash basin. The arrow seemed to be made of bone and suffused a blue luster. It was extremely beautiful.

If Klein had hesitated in any way, he definitely wouldn't have been able to escape this sudden attack!

After rolling for a moment, Klein reached into his pocket and attempted to pull out a few tarot cards.

But at that moment, he felt a gust of wind engulf him. Through the corner of his eyes, he saw a black figure quickly closing in on him at high speeds. It appeared in front of him in an extraordinary pose, as he tightened his foot and kicked out from bottom to top.

Realizing that he couldn't avoid the attack, Klein quickly gave up on his previous intentions and used his elbow to block the attack.

With a bang, he felt his entire left arm go numb, and his body was yanked over, just like in the sport squash, that the middle class loved to play the most, or like a soccer ball that was now popular among the lower class.

*What immense strength! *Klein's heart tightened. Without being flustered, he adjusted his body in midair and changed his posture, barely maintaining his balance as if he was performing acrobatics.

Pa! Pa! Pa… At this moment, a tree-bark-colored blow-pipe had just landed on the floor of the bathroom and bounced behind the door, at a declining speed.

Just as Klein was about to stretch out his body to firmly stand and face the follow-up attack, a scene suddenly flashed in his mind.

The speed of the enemy in black far exceeded his expectations, arriving even faster than he had expected. He lowered his body and swung his arm, striking him in the chest.

In the blink of an eye, Klein's body bent over, spinning half a circle more, like a small ball that kept falling and kept being thrown around.

Pow!

He stretched out his hand and pressed it to the ground, opening his legs like scissors while keeping his head low. It made black-clothed man's fist miss as it tore through empty space.

The fist that was originally aimed at his chest could only hit his legs after Klein turned his body, but his legs were opened wide.

Pushing up, his legs closed in together, allowing Klein to leap nimbly to the side as he finally managed to stand up straight.

Pow!

Before he had the chance to observe his enemy, the black figure had already arrived in front of him, bringing with it a strong gust of wind.

What a fast reaction! Klein quickly lifted his arms up in front of him to block.

With a dull thud, he felt as if he had collided with a black bear. Failing to withstand the immense force, he could only stagger backward, his arms almost turning numb in the process.

At the same time, Klein finally recognized his attacker.

He had dark skin, a lean and hardy build with recessed eye sockets. He was none other than the "executioner" of the Zmanger gang, Meursault, the person who had come to see Detective Moriarty in the morning!

Pa! Pa! Pa! With a fierce glint in his eyes, Meursault closely pursued after him as he flung both of his arms, delivering left hooks or right punches in a barrage of attacks at Klein.

The gap between Klein's strength and that of his opponent was obvious. He was unable to face him head on, and he had to rely on his agility and premonitory senses to barely avoid the combo of punches.

No! I have to make full use of my advantages! With a similar thought, Klein stopped engaging in melee combat. He lowered his body and rolled to the side.

*Crack! *A chair was torn apart by Meursault's kick.

Klein supported his body with one hand as he exerted strength in his waist and continued rolling in a bid to seek a chance to use his tarot cards and self-made charms.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Meursault caught up quickly and kicked out his legs, one after another, that was in no way slower than his opponent.

He was like a giant bear with the gift of agility and had zero weaknesses. He made it so that the rolling Klein was only capable of focusing on dodging and defending, without giving him the chance to draw his cards or use his charms.

Kacha! Bam! Bam!

A chair was broken, the table overturned, the coat rack toppled, and Klein had circled most of the way around, but his situation was turning dire.

*I can't go on like this! *He kept dodging, rolling and tumbling, seeking every opportunity to turn the situation around.

Suddenly, an idea came to him when he spotted the coffee table in the living room through the corner of his eyes.

Bam! Klein defended a blow with one arm as jumped back towards the living room while enduring the pain.

At this moment, Meursault's leg muscles bulged suddenly like they were inflated with air.

*Boom! *He stepped on the ground so hard that it seemed to shake, and he jumped up and shot at Klein like a bullet, with one of his legs aimed at him.

Klein barely managed to hold on for a moment before being sent flying again, crashing through the coffee table with a clang, sending the ceramic tea set flying towards the cupboard, scattering the round fountain pens, the contract template, and the various newspapers on the floor.

Seeing that the detective in the black double-breasted coat was weakened from the impact and momentarily unable to stand up or roll, a fierce glint flashed in Meursault's eyes. He slid forward, pushing his knee out amidst the shattering sounds of the porcelain.

Klein's eyes turned dark as he watched this scene. He was already holding a contract template in his hands.

He had fled to the coffee table in the living room, ignoring the warnings his premonition was giving him, solely to pick up a contract template or newspaper!

When he saw Meursault's knee coming at him, Klein's wrist shook.

At that moment, a scene appeared in his mind once again, a scene with Meursault's neck twisted backward.

Sou!

Klein slightly pressed his wrist, shaking out the contract template in his hand.

Sou!

The contract was like a dart made of fine steel as it shot at Meursault's throat. At that moment, the distance between the two of them was less than a meter. Moreover, as Meursault closed in, the distance between them was decreasing!

A white item was reflected in Meursault's eyes as he instinctively tried to jump back to dodge it.

Oof!

The contract stabbed right through Meursault's throat, penetrating his windpipe.

Blood with patches of bubbling blood gushed out as Meursault fell in front of Klein, his knees heavily hitting the ground.

"Huff… Huff… Huff…” He pulled out the bloodied contract template and clutched his throat.

However, he was unable to stop the blood from flowing out of his wound, and his eyes gradually became unfocused.

In the end, his body twitched a few times, and he stopped moving.

Klein took a moment to recover before he had the strength to turn around and stand up. He had a few tarot cards between his fingers, on guard against possible counterattacks and other enemies.

After activating his Spirit Vision and confirming that his assailant was dead, Klein looked around and didn't see any other auras.

Only then did he relax a little. He noticed that two of the chairs were broken, the coffee table was smashed up in several spots, and porcelain was strewn all over the floor. The entire living room, dining room, and foyer were in a mess.

Lowering his head, he saw that the sleeves of his suit had been damaged and that the outer layer of the cloth had been stained with a great deal of dust.

Suddenly, Klein said softly in a self-deprecating manner, "There's no way to claim reimbursement for this…

"Haha. Hahaha. Hahaha."

He laughed as if he had encountered something that could amuse him for the rest of his life. He laughed so hard that his body bent forward and backward, to the point where only his laughter reverberated in the entire house.

A few seconds later, Klein stopped smiling and walked to the corpse with a heavy expression.

He wanted to make the dead speak!

Being familiar with the mediumship ritual and answering his own prayers, Klein took of a whiff of the refreshing fragrance and used the technique of dream divination to whisper, "The mastermind who sent Meursault on this mission."

Soon, his eyes turned black as he entered a dream and saw a gray blur.

Suddenly, the gray and blurry world and lit figures changed, forming numerous scenes and images before him.

In front of Meursault was a middle-aged man without a hat. His white shirt had a complicated, layered, petal-shaped collar and cuffs, which made him look very magnificent. Matched with a tight black vest and skinny trousers, he looked gaudy and exaggerated.

This middle-aged man had brown hair and blue eyes, a thin face with a stubble. He was a very good-looking gentleman.

He looked at Meursault and said in a deep voice, "No matter what you do, make sure you find Ian Wright alive. If he's dead, bring him to me within an hour, preferably within fifteen minutes."

"Yes, Mr. Ambassador." Meursault didn't hide his unruliness but still kept his head lowered.

The scene shattered, and Klein frowned.

Mr. Ambassador?

This matter actually involves other countries?

Judging by the style of the shirt, the ambassador is most likely the ambassador of the Intis Republic to Backlund.

Ian is only a teenage boy…

That gentleman is able to channel spirits, or at least he has someone around him who can do so…

Klein thought for a moment, then constructed another sentence for the dream divination.

"The reason for finding Ian Wright."

In the grayish blurry dream, Klein once again saw the middle-aged gentleman from before.

He stared at Meursault and said in a low voice, "You don't need to know why. Just heed my instructions.

"I gave you the potion and money to become the person in power behind the Zmanger gang; not for you to raise questions, but for you to do things!

"Yes… You only need to know that Ian Wright might be involved in an item of great importance."

As the scene faded away, Klein once again exited the dream.

An item of great importance… I really can't tell, Ian… What could it be… Potion… So Meursault is actually a Beyonder. It's no wonder that his combat skills were so powerful and terrifying. He should be a Beyonder adept in this field… As these thoughts crossed his mind, Klein felt exhausted. It seemed that responding to his own request had consumed too much of his spirituality.

If he wanted to have his mediumship standards restored to what it was previously, he estimated that it would only happen when he was a Sequence 7.

After ending the ritual and dispelling the wall of spirituality, Klein looked at Meursault's corpse and carefully observed it for a long time.

Finally, he saw specks of spiritual radiance converging at the wound on his opponent's throat, slowly congealing into a piece.

Carefully grabbing it, Klein pulled out a dark red object that looked like jelly from Earth.

Is this the Beyonder characteristic left behind by Meursault? I wonder what kind of Sequence potion it is… That's easy to determine. I'll get the answer by doing a divination above the gray fog… Theoretically speaking, the Beyonder characteristic of Low-Sequence Beyonders will be able to imbue a person with the corresponding powers, even without the supplementary ingredients. However, one can easily lose control and go insane on the spot after consuming it… Nearly all the supplementary ingredients for low Sequence potions lack spirituality… Klein's thoughts ran wild before he finally forced himself to focus.

A corpse was now in front of him. It gave him a headache thinking about what he should do next.

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CHAPTER 229
LESSER OF TWO EVILS

Meursault's body lay there, his eyes wide open, as if he still had a murderous look in them.

The wound that had severed half his throat was originally thin, but with the condensation of the Beyonder characteristic, it had expanded by quite a bit and became much more mangled.

At the same time, the phenomenon of incontinence after death made his lower body reek of a stench.

Klein held onto the crimson jelly-like object, feeling troubled about what he should do next.

He had three general choices. The first was to clean up the scene, deal with his wounds, and to report it to the police in the name of legitimate self-defense. The second was to wait deep into night, throw the corpse into some sewer, and pretend that nothing had happened. The third was to immediately give up his current identity, flee to another borough, and change his name again.

The problem with the first option was that Klein was still an illegal resident with skeletons in his closet. Reporting it to the police could easily lead to discovering a problem with his identity. As for the second option, other than being constantly worried that the corpse would be found and that the police would come knocking on his door, there was another hidden danger.

When the ambassador behind Meursault confirms the disappearance or death of his subordinate, he would definitely send someone else to 15

Minsk Street again. When that happens, Klein would be facing perhaps a Sequence 7 and/or Sequence 6 enemy. He was facing a faction that might very well be a country, a powerful country.

The third option seemed to be the wisest and safest option that allowed him to avoid all the risks, but there was also a downside, and that was that the portrait of Klein was likely to be posted, making him wanted. Furthermore, it would be a portrait of his undisguised self which Mrs. Sammer next door, his neighbor Lawyer Jurgen, and others would describe. Once the wanted notice was published in the corresponding newspapers, even if it was limited to the greater Backlund area, Klein would very likely be recognized by Daly and the other Nighthawks. That would make the problem become even more troublesome.

As this matter involved Ince Zengwell and Sealed Artifact 0-08, it was highly likely that he would be pursued by an expert at the level of a high-ranking deacon.

Of course, the third option had a separate branch which was, of course, to hide the body and dump the evidence into the sewers, and then try to escape. However, there was also the risk of becoming wanted when the ambassador couldn't find Klein. He could order the members of the Zmanger gang to call the police and use the official forces of Backlund to search—and if he could track Klein down, that would be the same as the second option.

After thinking about it, Klein quickly came to a decision: *Divination…*

Of course, he was inclined towards a particular option already, the lesser of two evils. The first option was relatively less risky, and it allowed him to take the initiative to a certain extent. Through exposure, he could attract the attention of the official factions and suppress the Ambassador's subsequent actions from being too maniacal.

He took out a piece of paper and wrote a divination statement. After that, Klein took out a spirit pendulum from his left wrist, causing the topaz

pendant to naturally hang down over the surface of the paper.

"I should make a police report.

"I should make a police report."

…

After he finished his silent incantation, he saw the spirit pendulum rotating clockwise with weak amplitudes and a relatively high frequency.

This indicated a positive response!

After divining the other two choices in turn and obtaining a negative answer from both of them, Klein no longer hesitated and began to deal with the scene.

He put on a pair of black gloves and began to search the corpse. He found a sharp dagger, a small stack of cash, a pack of cigarettes, a lighter, and some miscellaneous items.

Klein put the rest of the items back in place, took off his gloves, held the dagger in his hand, and stabbed it into Meursault's throat wound, destroying its original shape.

Then, he wore his gloves and let Meursault grab the dagger.

After doing all of this, Klein gathered together the Meursault's Beyonder characteristic, the self-made charms, the tarot cards, the blood-stained contract, the paper on which the divination was written, and the various materials he carried around with him, and put them in a paper bag.

Then, he summoned himself in a ritual and transformed into a special spirit.

Carrying Azik's copper whistle, he felt himself become stronger and more corporeal. Klein picked up the paper bag, ended the summoning, and

returned to the world above the gray fog.

He placed the items from reality behind The Fool's high back chair for the time being, leaving Azik's copper whistle as well. Then he relaxed himself as he stimulated the sensation of descending rapidly and re-entered his own body.

The reason why Klein didn't burn the blood-stained contract and the piece of paper on which he had written the divination statement was because he was afraid that after the report was sent to the police, the matter would be transferred to a special department, and a powerful Beyonder would engage in divination pertaining to the situation.

However, with the gray fog's interference, even if the Eternal Blazing Sun were to personally descend, "He" wouldn't be able to obtain a productive answer.

This was also the reason why Klein placed his weekly review and summary above the gray fog after his spirituality was greatly enhanced after advancing to Sequence 8.

Right now, he couldn't afford to take on more suspicion and deeper investigations!

After removing the wall of spirituality, the wind that suddenly stirred blew away the remaining smell of the ritualistic materials. The items related to the domain of mysticism and Beyonders that were left behind on Klein's body and in the entire house were the candles that were silently burning in front of him.

But this time, he chose ordinary candles. Since he was praying and summoning himself, there was no need to be so meticulous.

And in a family, having candles was a very normal thing that matched the era, even if he was the only bachelor in the family.

After extinguishing the candles and returning them to their original spot, Klein took out his golden pocket watch, snapped it open, and estimated the number of minutes since Meursault's death and added the minimum amount of time it would take for the police to send people to investigate and report back.

He wanted to ensure that even if a Beyonder came to investigate, an hour would have passed since Meursault's death.

In mysticism and in the domain of spirit-channeling, this was an important time point. Beyond it, the information available was very limited and vague. For example, one could discover, through mediumship, that the person who killed Meursault was Sherlock Moriarty; however, they couldn't get the specifics of the death.

As for whether or not his opponents could divine if Beyonders were involved, Klein wasn't worried at all, because the main factors involved (the bloodied template contract) were above the gray fog.

Even his premonition and combat abilities would also be obscured as the opponent's divination would definitely point towards the mysterious space above the gray fog, and would certainly suffer from interference.

*Fortunately, I'm also a professional… It feels like I've really become Moriarty… *Klein re-examined the scene, making sure that there were no problems, and began to walk with his eyes fixed on his pocket watch.

After the estimated time, he put on his gold-rimmed glasses and waited for a few minutes before he opened the door and went out.

The sky in Backlund had already gone dark, and the gas lamps on the street lit up the rain.

As a middle-class neighborhood, Minsk Street was often patrolled by the police. Klein waited for a while, then spotted the target and went up to meet them.

They were two low-ranking constables with only one chevron on their Paulette. They held guns, batons, and were holding up an umbrella while looking around.

"Officers! A criminal attacked me! " Klein shouted with great skill.

His unkempt appearance made the two constables place importance on the matter. They each took out their batons and looked warily to the side.

"Where's the criminal?" the round-faced, brown-eyed cop asked in a deep voice.

Klein pointed to his house.

"He sneaked into my home and tried to kill me!

"In the fight, I accidentally stabbed him to death!"

*Stabbed him to death… *The two constables exchanged looks and looked at Klein with scrutiny.

"Take us there."

"Alright!" Klein acted like he had just survived a disaster as he led the two officers to 15 Minsk Street, took out his key, and opened the door.

The two police constables first saw the chaotic scene before noticing the corpse laying on the ground. They noticed the hideous wound on the deceased's throat, and noticed a bloody dagger.

"Watch the scene, I'll return to the station and report it to the inspector," another constable said to his round-faced, brown-eyed colleague.

"Alright." The round-faced, brown-eyed constable cast his gaze on at Klein, his face and body language revealing his wariness and caution.

After a while, a sergeant dressed in black-and-white checkered uniform with three chevrons on his epaulet arrived with the constable from before and two other subordinates.

The constables investigated the scene and while searching for clues, the sergeant with a short brownish-yellow beard under his chin brought Klein to the side and began asking some preliminary questions.

"Name."

"Sherlock Moriarty. This is my rental receipt for half a year." Klein had long prepared all of this.

The sergeant gave him a casual look and continued asking, "What's your occupation?"

"Private detective," answered Klein frankly.

The sergeant frowned and said, "Do you know the deceased? Do you know why he attacked you?"

"I know him. His name is Meursault, and he's the executioner of the Zmanger gang." Klein didn't wait for the sergeant to ask any further questions as he continued, "I had previously accepted a job from Ian Wright who asked me to investigate his former employer, Detective Zreal Victor Lee. This matter happened to be related to the Zmanger gang and Meursault.

"I tailed him and found out that he was secretly meeting a gentleman who appeared to be of significant standing. Meursault addressed him as Mr. Ambassador." After saying that, Klein was unsurprised to see the sergeant's expression change.

"Ambassador… Do you know his name?" the sergeant asked in a deep voice.

"I don't know, but if I saw his picture, I'd definitely recognize him," Klein told the truth. "This morning, Meursault came to me and asked me to seek Ian Wright. On the basis of my professional ethics as a private detective, I refused him, and when I got home in the evening, I was attacked and almost killed by him. Thankfully, I'm still quite skilled at combat and was sufficiently quick to react."

The sergeant thought for a moment and asked for details of the fight. Klein recounted the fight from beginning to end nearly in its entirety, changing his premonition to a reaction, then changing the contract template he had thrown in the fight into a dagger that Meursault had dropped.

"Yea… Follow us back to the police station and wait for the autopsy results, the results of the on-site investigation, and inquiries from the relevant parties involved." The sergeant's thoughts wasn't on the case anymore, clearly acting rather perfunctory.

Right now, he only had one thought in his mind:

This was an important case involving foreign ambassadors!

He had to report it immediately!

In his daze, he suddenly thought of a question and quickly added, "What's your faith?"

"God of Steam and Machinery," Klein replied without hesitation.

The Backlund headquarters of the Church of the Lord of Storms was in the Cherwood Borough, so cases involving Beyonders were often referred to them, with one exception—the people involved had to be believers of the Lord of Storms.

In order to not encounter the Nighthawks, Klein had no choice but to let the Goddess down.

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CHAPTER 230
INTERROGATION

Empress Borough. In an unremarkable house.

Xio and Fors took a seat at random and examined the writing on the blackboard. Like always, Mr. A was sitting quietly, alone on the sofa at the front in his hooded robe, looking down at the crowd from a high vantage point.

Sequence 8 Sheriff potion formula. 450 pounds… Xio silently read the familiar content as she inwardly let out of sigh of relief.

The situation she feared the most was the lack of a seller when she had finally amassed the money with great difficulty!

I received 400 pounds from the split, plus my original savings of 150 pounds, that's enough… However, I'd definitely need a huge sum of money for the main ingredient… Ah right, maybe I can change circles and see if there are any Beyonders who are interested in this formula… Xio suddenly felt invigorated, and she realized that she had found a way to make a fortune.

Frankly speaking, there was no way she would leak the formula if she wasn't in desperate need for money to buy the materials to concoct the potion. On the one hand, most people always hoped that there were fewer Beyonders in their own Sequences, and on the other hand, the price of the corresponding ingredients would be raised significantly if there were many competitors who bid up the prices of the ingredients. It was the same with the subsequent potions.

After some serious thought, Xio slowly became nervous again, because it was normal for a recipe to be placed on sale for a long time without being sold.

Moreover, the Arbiter pathway belonged to the royal family and the military. All aspects were strictly controlled, and the leaked ones came from a small number of destitute nobles. There were hardly any complete formulas for the low to mid Sequences. Often, only one or two of them were complete and compounded with the knowledge that the main ingredients were controlled and difficult to obtain. Beyonders who chose this Sequence were rather rare.

Xio had been in some mysticism circles in Backlund for a long period of time, but she hadn't found an Arbiter apart from herself. On the one hand, the others might have concealed it well, but on the other hand, that might also explain the problems faced in this Sequence pathway.

Phew, but compared to Fors, I'm lucky enough. She hasn't encountered any of the subsequent recipes for Apprentice all this time… Xio saw Mr. A's attendant approaching and wrote a note saying that she was purchasing the Sheriff's recipe.

Before long, she was led to the study on the first floor. Before entering, she took a hooded robe from the attendant and covered herself with it.

The seller in the study was dressed in the same way, so they couldn't see each other's faces clearly.

"This is the formula to the Sheriff potion. Where's my money?" the seller asked with a hoarse voice as he pressed a piece of paper on the desk.

Xio pulled out the cash that she had long counted numerous times and pushed it to the seller.

After checking the authenticity of the notes and the total sum, the seller finally released the potion formula he held.

Xio immediately took one step forward and grabbed the note.

Her eyes swept straight to the main ingredients as they were of great importance.

"A pair of Terror Demon Worm's eyes. Silver War Bear's right palm."

Beyonder items I know of, but I've never seen them being sold… Xio sighed and walked out of the study and took off her robe.

Back in the living room, she sat beside Fors. Having fulfilled her wish, she slowly began to worry about the unknown honorary name and the evil spirit that might be haunting her.

*10, no, 20, no, 30 to request for someone skilled in exorcism to do a purification ritual for me. *Xio made up her mind, and after exchanging a few whispered words with Fors, she beckoned for Mr. A's attendant.

After the end of the free communication break, she saw her request appear as an additional entry on the blackboard.

"Suspected haunting of evil spirits. Requesting the help of friends who specialize in exorcism. 30 pounds."

After a while, Mr. A's attendant came to the two of them and quietly invited them to the living room on the first floor.

There was a man wearing a white mask inside. He looked at the two people who were wearing loose robes that concealed their genders and chuckled.

"Let me introduce myself first, so that you won't doubt my ability."

"No, no, we trust Mr. A," Xio, with her hood over her face, said before Fors could open her mouth.

She deliberately suppressed her voice to prevent her childish voice from revealing her identity.

The man with the white mask spread his hands and laughed.

"This is my habit, I am a believer of the Sun. As you know, this is not common in Backlund, or in the entire kingdom.

"It is only through moments like this that I can live as my true self."

Due to the great conflict between the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun and the Church of the Lord of Storms, the former had never been able to obtain the right to proselytize in the Loen Kingdom.

"A believer of the Sun?" Fors's languid look instantly vanished. "This is the first time I'm seeing a living believer of the Sun! Eh… It's not like I can meet diplomats of higher standing."

"Then, should I feel honored?" The man in the white mask spread his arms wide and held them up in a gesture of praise for the Sun.

Instead of answering his question, Fors smiled and said, "In terms of exorcism and purification, the attendant of the Sun is a professional. Our hearts are at rest, so we can begin."

The man who claimed to be a believer of the Sun didn't drone on. He took out a badge with the symbol of the "Sun" on it and placed it on the round table in the center. Then, he used a dualistic ritual method to light up two candles.

After finishing the preparatory steps one step at a time, he chanted with a loud and abnormally pious tone.

"The Sun that is Eternal,

"You are an Inextinguishable Light.

"You are the Embodiment of Order

"I pray to you,

"Please bestow me with your cleansing glow.

"Please repel the evils spirits in this body."

…

Amid the echoing Hermes incantation, Xio and Fors saw bright light burst out from the Sun's emblem, bursting in a pure and warm manner.

It was endless, like the tide, as the light surged towards the two of them, engulfing them simultaneously.

Nearly a minute later, everything was restored to normal. All Xio and Fors felt was warmth, finding the warmth very comfortable and relieving. It was like soaking in a hot spring, or having gone sunbathing.

…

Cherwood Borough. Rice Police Station.

Klein was sitting on a low bench with a group of thieves and drunkards. It looked very disgraceful.

Suddenly, he felt warmth on the back of his hand as the coldness of the Backlund night was dispelled quite significantly.

Lowering his head, Klein realized that the four black dots representing the mysterious space above the gray fog didn't appear.

Who's being so kind? To know that I was feeling a little cold just now… he mumbled half jokingly and half-curious.

As a former inspector, he looked at the thief on the left who was handcuffed to the pipe, then at the drunkard on the right who could vomit at any moment but kept yelling about hitting people. He sighed at his present predicament and wasn't sure when he would be free from this.

There should be another test after this and then I'll be fine once I pass it… I hope the police will have their attention on the ambassador and the Zmanger gang, and ignore my origins as a puny detective. In theory, there's a high chance for that. As long as Mrs. Sammer, Mr. Jurgen, and the others don't say anything of interest to the police… Yes, they have only just met me so it's impossible for them to know too much…

Meursault's Beyonder characteristic was taken away by me and was hidden above the gray fog. He didn't leave behind anything strange, so no one would able to discover that he used to be a Beyonder and have questions about my strength… Hmm… More than an hour has passed…

In his self-encouragement, Klein saw the officer with the short brownish-yellow beard walking towards him.

"Sherlock Moriarty, come with me to the interrogation room," the sergeant said without further explanation.

Here it comes… Klein stood up and followed.

After going around a corner, the sergeant stopped in front of an iron door and gestured for Klein to enter.

Klein took a deep breath before exhaling. He yanked the handle and opened the door.

It was a small room with thick walls and a small table in the middle. There were chairs on both sides of the table.

Under the elegant gas lamp's illumination, Klein identified the interrogator as a man who wore a black shirt, a rather uncommon sight.

He didn't wear a vest but wore a black coat that wasn't part of the usual formal attire. He had thin eyebrows and cold blue eyes. His face was cut, looking rigid while lacking any gentleness.

The man pointed the chair opposite him and said in a deep voice, "I ask, you answer."

Before he finished his sentence, Klein felt an unimaginable suppressive force on him. He felt that an electric current was tearing through his mind that lashed at his soul with a barbed whip.

This "feeling" was painful and numbing, as though it stemmed from deep within the brain. It was barely resistible, and all he could do was tremble and have his knees buckle.

Klein nearly fell to the ground as he hurriedly held onto the table and sat down. His temples felt a throbbing pain.

This… this is the result of Beyonder powers… Ordinary people might've thought of it as a psychological problem caused by nervousness and the authority of the interrogator opposite them, but Klein had clearly identified that this was a result of Beyonder powers, powers that could directly attack the mind of others!

He quickly recalled the information he had seen before and quickly confirmed the target of his suspicion.

Arbiter pathway, Sequence 7: Interrogator!

Has the matter been transferred to a special department of the military? Klein thought with some relief.

As long as it isn't the Nighthawks, everything's fine.

"Identify the ambassador who met Meursault from these photographs." The cold and unyielding man in black spread out eight black-and-white photos

on the small table.

Klein felt as if the electric whip in his mind was being lifted high, and the warning of extreme pain made it so he didn't dare to lie.

Of course, there was no need for Klein to lie. After a moment of identification, he pushed a photo in the direction of the interrogator. It was a middle-aged gentleman who wore ostentatious clothing and looked rather charming.

The interrogator glanced at it, but didn't make any response. He once again asked, "Were your previous statements the truth?"

Klein felt like he was being forced into a dream. He kept his mind clear and rational, and he didn't yield to the "whip" in his mind as he sincerely replied, "Nothing but the truth."

The interrogator leaned forward with his hands on the small table and said, "When was the last time you met Ian Wright?"

"Yesterday, yesterday morning," Klein said with great difficulty, "I tailed Meursault and found the body of Detective Zreal. As I didn't want to deal with the police, I took Ian to identify the body and told him to call the police. Zreal's body was located at the sewer entrance at the bottom of Iron Carbon Street in East Borough."

After a brief silence, the interrogator finally nodded his head. Klein immediately felt the enormous pressure disappear along with the "whip" in his mind.

"You may leave now," he said without a trace of emotion in his voice.

Klein stood up and opened the door, not masking the frailty in his gait.

He found it more tiring than fighting Meursault. If he made the slightest mistake, his spirit would've been completely crushed, and he would

obediently answer any question that the other party asked.

No, if it wasn't for the fact that my spirit is special and how it's been subjected to the test of raving and screaming for a long period of time, allowing me to maintain my calm and rationality under certain circumstances, I would've most likely had a mental breakdown just now… Klein walked back down the corridor, his back feeling cold.

At this moment, the sergeant from before came over and said, "Come with me to fill out some forms. Lawyer Jurgen is waiting to bail you out."

Phew… Klein secretly exhaled and completely relaxed.

He knew that the danger was over.

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CHAPTER 231
LOSSES

Klein met Jurgen Cooper in an office at the Rice Police Station. This young senior solicitor was still dressed formally as though he was always ready to go to a posh dinner party.

He wore a black double-breasted attire, a white shirt with a stiff collar, a huge bow tie, and bright leather boots, which made the policemen act very polite to him.

Jurgen held his half top hat and looked at Klein with his blue eyes while saying, "The formalities are over. You can leave if you pay the bail of ten pounds."

"Thank you." Klein didn't say anything more, but followed the good-looking but seemingly old-fashioned Jurgen to the police station's financial affairs office that was nearby, where he fished out his wallet and pulled out two five-pound notes.

He was grateful that he had all his cash—95 pounds—on him, or else he might've had to borrow it from his good neighbor, Jurgen.

Of course, the worst-case scenario would be if he had left the money at home. Klein wasn't certain how much of that would be left after the police searched the scene. Yet, he couldn't put it in the world above the gray fog, because it was possible that he needed to offer bribes to free himself.

At present, many newspapers and magazines were discrediting the police as being unsupervised, violent, corrupt, extortionary, and vicious. Klein didn't dare to believe it fully, but neither did he dare to doubt it. After all,

Meursault's money could very well end up in the pockets of someone in the police station.

After paying the bail, Klein followed Jurgen out of the police station and shivered when hit by the humid, cold wind.

"After the case is closed, your bail will be returned to you. Of course, you can't expect them to voluntarily notify you. Yes… In a week, if no one notifies you that your presence is required back at the station, you can come here and ask for your bail to be returned. In theory, you could still get appropriate compensation, if any, from the other party's estate." Jurgen walked over to a carriage parked nearby.

The rain that had poured down during the entire day had finally come to a stop, but the crimson moon remained hidden by the dark clouds. The only light that could be seen on the street was from the gas lamps.

"Alright." Klein almost believed that he would have to part with the ten pounds forever.

He couldn't help but calculate how much it cost him to take up Ian's job. He had been paid five pounds, but many pieces of furniture and tea sets were destroyed at his home. He either had to buy new ones or get someone to repair them for him. With the materials used, the cost of the carriage, and the cost of mending his clothes, the math seemed to imply that he would be losing money…

If I don't manage to get back the ten pounds worth of bail money, this would be a great loss! Well… the Beyonder characteristic left behind by Meursault is actually worth quite a bit of money… Klein got into the carriage and frowned slightly.

He had always thought that the private detectives who used their own residences as offices would, at most, not be entrusted with anything and wouldn't suffer any losses, but in the end…

Klein turned his head to look at Jurgen, who was sitting up straight, and he said with sincerity, "Thank you. Thank you for coming to bail me out. How much should I pay you?"

Jurgen nodded very formally and said, "This one's pro bono.

"I heard from Sergeant Faxine that you were involved in an incident. I believe that we'll have many opportunities to work together in the future."

There will be many opportunities to work together in the future… Klein couldn't help but laugh as he said, "Lawyer Jurgen, are you cursing me?"

Jurgen shook his head solemnly and said, "No, it's not what you think. It's very common for a private detective to have a fixed lawyer he works with."

Sir, you sure lack a sense of humor… even though you look rather young… Klein lampooned before saying with a smile, "Coincidentally, I'm in need of a lawyer to help me draw up an investment contract."

"Investment contract?" Jurgen asked in a slightly stunned tone.

"I know that this isn't part of the work of a private detective, but I happened to chance upon a good investment opportunity," Klein explained simply. "Lawyer Jurgen, how much would a contract cost according to your usual fees?"

"Generally, it's based on the total amount of the contract and the level of ease," Jurgen answered seriously.

"The total amount is one hundred pounds, the terms needed are…" Klein described his needs in detail, including a preemptive right, veto rights, and so on.

Jurgen thought hard for a few minutes before saying, "Two pounds. I'll give it to you Monday morning."

"Alright," Klein said no more regarding the matter. Instead, he began asking Jurgen information about the case that night.

On the way back to Minsk Street, Klein took the initiative to pay the carriage's fare of 3 soli. After bidding farewell to the young but serious lawyer, he walked back to his house.

He opened the door and when he saw the messy scene, his heart winced.

He never expected that he would start his detective business with a loss.

Just as Klein took off his coat and began working on cleaning up the mess, the doorbell rang.

He opened the door in puzzlement and saw Julianne, the maid from next door in a black-and-white skirt.

"Good evening, Mr. Moriarty. Mr. and Mrs. Sammer wish to invite you over to discuss something," Julianne said with a tone that had traces of fear.

Here it comes… the problem regarding compensation… Klein revealed a smile and said, "Alright."

He changed into a clean coat and followed the maidservant next door. Luke Sammer and his wife, Stelyn Sammer were sitting on a sofa in the living room.

The stout Luke, with a pencil-thin mustache, stood up and extended his hand as he said with a chuckle, "Good evening, Mr. Moriarty. I only just learned that you were a private detective. That's quite unbecoming as a neighbor."

"No, it was my fault. I didn't know if I was suited for this career and might find other jobs at any moment," Klein said as he shook the hand of the male master. "I'm very sorry for what happened tonight. I'll compensate you."

"It's just an accident," Luke said reassuringly.

The blonde, blue-eyed, and pretty Stelyn asked out of curiosity, "Did you really kill the intruder? Heh, you must want black tea, right?"

Klein nodded.

"Perhaps he was just a thief."

He didn't mention that the problem stemmed due to one of his jobs, in order to prevent the Sammer couple from having any unpleasant feelings.

Since the police didn't inform them, there's no need for me to do anything unnecessary… Klein silently added.

Luke Sammer laughed and said, "You must possess excellent combat skills. As a neighbor, I feel very safe. Perhaps we will have matters to entrust you in the future."

Klein seemingly gave a self-deprecating laugh.

"Actually, I was almost killed."

"Regardless, you were the ultimate victor," Luke said.

After chatting about this topic for a while, Stelyn picked up a porcelain teacup and took a sip.

"I'm very curious about how many commissions a private detective receives a week, and how much can they earn?"

Klein didn't try to hide anything as he laughed.

"It depends on the situation. Just like when there are good and bad harvests in the farms. I earned five pounds and five soli last week. But after last night's incident, I might have made a loss."

As if she didn't hear the latter half of his words, she continued, "If you can maintain this income, you'll get a pretty good life in Backlund's Cherwood district at 5 pounds a week. There's no need to sublet another room, and you can hire a maid to do odd jobs, listen to a symphony every other week, or go to the theatrical opera once. Once a week, you can play tennis or squash, join a reading salon, and go to a nice restaurant. Of course, if you're already preparing for marriage, you need to save a little money. A weekly salary of five pounds is still a little short of being truly decent."

"Then, what is the required weekly salary to be truly decent?" Klein asked.

"Seven pounds, at least." Stelyn lifted her chin slightly.

Klein turned to Luke and said casually, "I heard from your wife that you work at Coim, but I'm not sure what its main business is."

"Anthracite and charcoal," Luke answered with a smile.

It's no wonder you became a member of the Soot Reduction Association… Klein pondered for a moment and said, "In Backlund, how big of a salary does a manager receive? It's seldom mentioned in the newspapers and magazines."

"Haha, it depends on the industry, as well as the actual position's job scope. Backlund Bank's best manager earns 5000 pounds a year, but for me, it's about 430 to 440 pounds including bonuses," Luke said casually.

That's about eight pounds a week… No wonder… Before Klein could open his mouth, Stelyn Samuel grumbled, "Actually, we could've lived in the suburbs, and I'll have a garden and a lawn. Luke would then be able to have a stable and buy a new carriage and the two foals he's been eyeing all this time, but he would waste too much time on his commute to work. That would be even more valuable."

*A new carriage including horses costs about a hundred pounds… Eight pounds a week is indeed impressive; unfortunately, it hasn't been long since

I had a pay rise when… *Klein could only smile in response.

After exchanging a few more pleasantries, he bade farewell and left, sighing to himself in his heart.

Mr. and Mrs. Sammer are still considered nice. If I had a mean landlord, I'd have had my deposit deducted and refunded and be asked to get lost after what happened tonight…

After returning home, Klein began laboring. He wasn't in a hurry to go above the gray fog to examine the warm current on the back of his hand, nor was he in a hurry to do divination because he was afraid that the military's special department was still keeping tabs on him.

He decided to go to the bar which Ian had described tomorrow night to buy a gun so as to deal with people who might assault him recklessly in desperation.

Klein even planned to find the means to hire a bodyguard, a powerful Beyonder bodyguard. This was so that first, he could take advantage of the opportunity to contact Beyonder circles without exposing himself, and second, it was because he was also afraid that the ambassador's next assailant would have the ability to hide from the military's special department.

Although it was a slightly comical thing for a Sequence 8 Beyonder—a vengeful evil spirit in hiding—to need a bodyguard, as safety was of paramount importance to Klein.

*If the price is too high, I'll blow the copper whistle for Mr. Azik, which, of course, might be more dangerous… I don't know much about Sealed Artifact 0-08… *After cleaning up the house, Klein silently muttered.

…

After the purification ceremony ended, the man in the white mask said to Xio and Fors,"No matter what kind of sinister spirit it is, it has already been exorcised by me. Heh, if it has reached the level of an evil spirit that I'm unable to exorcise, it should've given a response. However, there was none."

As he spoke, he poured the water which had condensed on the emblem of the Sun into a small metal bottle and handed it to Xio.

"Sprinkle it in your room to ward off any remnants."

"Thank you." Xio paid him while feeling the pinch, but she felt a lot more relaxed.

Moments after she returned to the living room with Fors, the attendant delivered a note to them.

"Miss Arbiter, who has just bought the Sheriff formula, would you mind having a chat in the study? I might have what you need."

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CHAPTER 232
THE BRAVEHEARTS BAR

Who? How did that person know that I purchased the Sheriff recipe? Xio's dark green pupils contracted as she surveyed her surroundings in astonishment, but she didn't see anyone suspiciously watching her.

*According to Mr. A, the transactions here should be very safe and confidential here… *Finally, Xio couldn't help but look at the single sofa where Mr. A, whose face was covered by a hood, sat. He was still quietly sizing people up without revealing anything odd.

She nudged Fors with her elbow and whispered, "Should I go?"

Fors took the piece of paper, glanced at it, and replied without hesitation, "Go, at least you still have Mr. A watching. No one would dare to do anything to you, so you can take the opportunity to find out what the other party's goal is. Who knows? You might actually obtain the potion materials you want as a result?"

"That makes sense…" Xio, who was a very proactive person, immediately nodded to the attendant, followed him to the study, and finally, put on a hooded robe.

*This hood can cover my entire face, so much so that I can't see the path in front of me… *Having worn the hood, Xio opened the door and saw a man dressed in a tuxedo sitting behind a desk.

The man wore a golden mask that revealed his eyes, nostrils, mouth, and cheeks, but it was impossible to identify him.

The light brown eyes behind the golden mask shifted as the man pointed to the chair opposite the desk and said, "Have a seat."

His voice was deliberately hoarse; otherwise, there was nothing special about it.

Xio closed the door to the study, stuck her chest out and raised her head, and sat down in the designated position without feeling intimidated. She then asked, "Do you have the main ingredients for the Sheriff potion?"

The masked man chuckled and said, "Yes, I have the eyes of a Terror Demon Worm and the right palm of a Silver War Bear.

"In fact, that Sheriff potion formula you bought was sold on my behalf…"

No wonder… Xio was often mocked as a brainless person by her good friends, but to survive in the circle of Beyonders, in the gangs of the East Borough, and among the poor, she wasn't a completely reckless person. She had the intuition for danger that was akin to a wild beast.

She asked in a deep voice, "Why are you doing this?"

"To select suitable helpers." The masked man chuckled. "With your financial situation, it'll be difficult for you to gather the money needed for these two Beyonder ingredients in a short period of time. Of course, you can sell the formula at other Beyonder gatherings, but please, believe me, this will bring you unnecessary danger. Our circles might not overlap, but I'm not the only person."

Xio frowned and said, "Since you have such a massive organization and possess the formulas to the Sheriff and Arbiter potions, why do you need my help?"

"There are certain matters we do not wish to deal with ourselves. There are many reasons, but there's no need for me to tell you that. And every Arbiter that embarks on the journey as a Beyonder by themselves has, more or less,

some connection with the aristocracy. This is something we need," the masked man explained, simply.

It seems like he doesn't know about my origins, nor is he aware of my reputation in the East Borough… Xio relaxed a little.

The masked man continued, "Just treat it as additional missions beyond the Beyonder gatherings. I will give you some missions and pay you with the corresponding rewards. If you feel that it's dangerous, you can reject them. This is a fair and free trade. Once you save up enough money, you can purchase the ingredients from me."

This… Xio, who was still struggling with her financial situation, suddenly had her heart stir. She continued acting reserved for nine seconds before she said, "As long as I have the right to reject missions, I can consider it."

"No problem." The masked man laughed. "We can agree on where and how we'll meet in the future. To make you feel at ease, we'll concede the right to decide the details to you."

"Alright." Although Xio was still baffled and didn't understand why the other party was offering her missions to perform, she still agreed.

At the very least, she couldn't identify any obvious dangers at the moment.

…

Klein busied himself with buying chairs and tea sets and mending his clothes the whole of Sunday. He spent a total of 6 pounds 9 soli to restore the living room, the dining room, and himself to their original states.

What a loss. I hope that the police department compensates me for my losses from Meursault's estate. Sigh, the chances are slim since it's, at best, just a portion. Klein placed the invoices and receipts neatly in place, waiting for them to be used in the future.

Of course, in terms of income alone, he had made quite a killing. Meursault's Beyonder characteristic was worth at least 300 pounds, or more.

The premise of all of this was that Klein had access to a circle of Beyonders.

After dinner, dressed in a turtleneck sweater, a solid-colored sweater, a grayish-blue worker's coat, and a cap, Klein went out, once again, and made two transfers before arriving at Iron Gate Street in the area of the Backlund Bridge.

He saw Bravehearts Bar after taking a few steps. He saw a seemingly heavy black wooden door and a nearly two-meter-tall brawny man with his arms folded.

The brawny man sized up Klein, but he didn't stop him from pushing open the door, but his throat moved when he heard the cheers inside.

This was when the bar was experiencing its peak business. Before Klein even entered, he felt a heat wave engulf him. He could smell the strong aroma of malt beer and hear a din.

Unsurprisingly, he saw two stages in the middle of the bar. One of them was having a rat-baiting with dogs competition, and the other stage had two boxers patiently waiting for the fight to begin.

The aroma of alcohol mixed with the smell of sweat emanated. Klein lifted his gold-rimmed glasses and pinched his nose. While protecting his belongings, he squeezed his way to the bar counter.

Before the bartender could say anything, he said, "One glass of Southville beer."

This was the best beer that the Loen Kingdom produced.

"Five pence," the bartender replied like clockwork.

Klein took out a handful of coins and counted out five pence before handing them over in exchange for a large wooden cup of golden beer. The aroma of the beer was alluring.

"In front of it, many beers can't even be called alcohol and can only be considered as beverages." The bartender chuckled.

Klein lifted up the cup and took a swig. It was cool and refreshing, first bitter and fragrant, but later, the flavor of malt burst out. It had a slightly sweet aftertaste.

After putting down the cup, he looked at the tiny white bubbles and took the opportunity to ask, "Where's Kaspars Kalinin?"

The bartender stopped wiping the glass in his hand as he looked up and observed Klein for a few seconds before pointing to the side.

"Billiard room 3."

In the spirit of not wasting anything, Klein carried the cup and walked to the third billiard room.

With just a light tap, he allowed the door to creak open.

The two men inside stopped and looked towards the door.

"I'm looking for Kaspars Kalinin." Amidst the silence, Klein hurriedly added, "Old Geezer introduced me."

Upon hearing this, a fifty-year-old man with a big nose and a linen shirt said in a deep voice, "Come in."

He had a huge, twisted scar running from the corner of his right eye to the side of his mouth, and his nose was a typical brandy nose, one that almost

completely red.

Klein slowly walked in with the cup in his hand and saw that Kaspars's billiard opponent had put aside his cue stick like clockwork and left the room before closing the door behind him.

Kaspars Kalinin hobbled over and asked, "What do you want?"

"A powerful custom revolver and fifty rounds." Klein took another sip of his Southville beer.

"3 pounds 10 soli." Kaspars gave the price. "This will definitely be more expensive than a regular weapons store. The price includes the risks I have to undertake."

"Deal." Klein took five one-pound notes he prepared from his trouser pocket and counted them.

Kaspars checked for the notes' authenticity before nodding.

"You're more straightforward than you look. Give me five minutes."

He put the notes on the billiard table, leaned against a crutch, and limped to the door.

After watching Kaspars leave, Klein glanced back at the currently trendy billiards and found it to be very similar to snooker on Earth.

It must be you, Emperor Roselle… He nearly lost his composure and laughed while shaking his head.

After a short wait, Kaspars pushed the door open and entered, carrying a package wrapped in brown paper and two five-soli notes.

Klein took the money and the item and opened it on the spot. His eyes caught the long, silvery barrel of a revolver. The grip seemed to be made of

walnut wood.

In addition to that, there were fifty glistening rounds neatly placed in the box.

Klein tried the empty gun, loaded five rounds, stuffed the revolver into his armpit holster he bought some time back. Then, he gathered up the remaining bullets and looked up at Kaspars. He deliberated and asked, "If I wish to hire a good bodyguard, who should I look for?

"A very good one, the kind that exceeds human limitations."

Kaspars rubbed his red nose and his eyes turned cold.

He carefully examined Klein for two minutes, using his silence to create a terrible sense of oppression.

"I can make the query for you, but there's no guarantee that someone will accept this mission."

He seems to know more than one Beyonder… Klein smiled and said, "No matter what the result is, please allow me to express my gratitude in advance."

Kaspars put away the bills on the billiard table and walked out again. It was a full ten minutes before he returned to his room. And by then, Klein had already finished his huge cup of Southville beer out of boredom.

"He wants to meet you before making a decision," Kaspars said in a deep voice.

"No problem. I would also determine the difficulty of the mission if it were me." Klein smiled and nodded.

He followed behind Kaspars who hobbled past the crowded boxing ring and into the kitchen of the bar.

Kaspars suddenly stopped and lightly knocked on a door. After gaining permission, he pushed it open and entered with Klein in tow.

It was a card room where more than ten people were playing Texas poker.

A man wearing a black vest and a white shirt slowly stood up after seeing Kaspars and Klein enter the room. The others who were playing cards stopped in their tracks and didn't make a sound.

With a single glance, Klein frowned indiscernibly.

Apart from the man that had stood up, he noticed that all the other players had an indescribable sense of strangeness to them. Their faces were pale, and their eyes were like those of wild beasts.

Tapping his left molar twice, Klein secretly activated his Spirit Vision.

His muscles tensed up abruptly, and he almost couldn't control his expression because the auras of those players were dark black!

That meant that, apart from the man who stood up, the ten plus people playing cards were all dead!

No, they weren't just dead, as the dead had no aura colors

These were all zombies!

The feeling of rotting came over him, and the man in the white shirt and black vest walked in front of Klein.

His face was equally pale, and there seemed to be deep malice in his eyes.

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CHAPTER 233
A MAN CANNOT BE JUDGED BY HIS LOOKS

The more he thought about how a living person was playing cards with more than ten corpses in a dimly lit room into the night, the more his scalp tingled.

Klein suppressed his instinctive fear and looked at the pale face, the malicious brown eyes, and the man who was about twenty-eight years old that suffused madness. He pretended to be intimidated by the man's dominance and took a step back. During this time, Kaspars left the room and closed the door.

The man asked in a deep voice, "You're the one looking for a bodyguard?"

“…Yes." Klein gulped deliberately.

The man's strangeness made him feel fear, but it also brought him peace of mind.

The stronger the bodyguard, the safer he would be!

The pale-faced man in the black vest lifted his chin and asked, "Why are you looking for a bodyguard? How much are you willing to pay for this?"

Klein didn't answer straight away. He thought for nearly twenty seconds before saying, "I'll tell you the details of the mission first. Give me a price after you assess it. If I can pay for it, or if I have an item of equivalent

value, we would have ourselves a deal. Otherwise, I can only give up and look for someone else."

The fierce-looking man didn't say a word. Instead, he nodded as a gesture for Klein to recount his story.

Klein deliberately looked at the zombies, treating them as normal card players. Then, he gave the man an inquisitive look saying: "Before I answer, do you want to kick these guys out of the room?"

"There's no need for that," the pale-faced man said in a deep voice.

Klein hesitated for a moment, then honestly said, "I offended a big shot who might have a country supporting him."

The room suddenly turned still and silent. The man, who had a hint of madness and malice in his eyes, froze on the spot as if he had turned into a plaster statue.

After nearly a minute, he slowly said, "This mission is priceless.

"Get out."

Ah? Klein didn't manage to react until the man turned and walked back to the card table. Only then did he realize that there was no deal.

*You played cards with a bunch of living corpses in the room and presented yourself as a person of high standing and strength. Yet, you were scared off just like that? You're clearly a little crazy… *Klein didn't know whether to laugh or cry as he added, "The big shot doesn't have that much freedom in Backlund."

The man in the black vest ignored him and sat down again. The zombies began to hand out cards, look at their cards, and throw out chips.

Klein exhaled and backed out of the room only to see Kaspars Kalinin. He had been waiting outside with his brandy nose and hideous wound.

"We didn't come to an arrangement." Klein threw up his hands.

Kaspars didn't show a look of surprise as he pondered for a few seconds before saying, "Did he request too high a price?"

"No, he finds the mission too difficult." Klein didn't hide the reason.

Kaspars frowned.

"Maric is the scariest person I know. He isn't even afraid of bullets, and since he thinks the mission is difficult, I don't think I can help you get in touch with other powerful people."

"What a pity." Klein sighed.

Kaspars clenched his right fist and struck his left chest.

"May the Storm be with you."

Then I'm dead… Klein said with a smile as he made the best out of it, "Thank you.

"You can try asking around for me. I'll pay you a fee. Yeah… I'll come again tomorrow night. "

After receiving a positive answer, he left the Bravehearts Bar feeling slightly melancholic. He didn't even have the interest to play a game of billiards.

Was I being too honest? If I described the mission in a way that sounded simpler, Maric would've agreed… I just wonder how much money he would ask for… Sigh, it's not my style to let someone else face the danger for me through deceit… As a Beyonder, if I constantly go against my heart's true

thoughts and my own principles, then I probably won't be far from losing control.… Feeling mixed emotions, Klein changed carriages and returned to Minsk Street.

…

After washing up, Klein didn't waste any charcoal. He directly went to the bedroom and pulled the curtain to isolate the room from the outside world.

On the way back, he carefully thought for a while and discovered that the possible danger wasn't something that couldn't be resolved.

To the unknown ambassador, his primary and fundamental purpose is to find Ian Wright. The reason he sent people to deal with me was because he wished to obtain clues to finding Ian from me. If direct interrogation doesn't work, killing me and channeling my spirit could be considered… If I let him know that I can't find Ian either, he wouldn't take the risk to deal with a hired detective when the military's special department might be monitoring the situation.

Of course, my appearance and strength far exceeded his expectations, causing their operation to be exposed and causing them to suffer heavy setbacks. If I were the ambassador, I would definitely think about revenge and vent my anger, but it definitely wouldn't be now, not when the situation is so tense and turbulent… Yes, this is building on the premise that the ambassador has brains, and he isn't a good-for-nothing who got to his position through connections and only knows to act rashly… For him to be handling such an important matter, it must mean that he's still rather reliable…

In other words, the crux of the problem is Ian Wright's whereabouts!

Hmm… There's still some latent danger. Would the ambassador reveal to the military's special department that Meursault is a Beyonder after his failure? That would make them find my strength questionable, and use them

to retaliate against me… This can be done easily with an offhand remark with no difficulty involved. I have to be on my guard…

Klein analyzed his situation and suddenly had the urge to kill the unknown ambassador.

However, just the thought of powerful Beyonders around him left him depressed.

I wonder if the messenger can accept my delegations without Mr. Azik's permission… Probably not… Should I pay close attention to this matter and find an opportunity to silence him? Since he sent someone to kill me, I wouldn't feel any psychological burden from killing him… Yes, I can consider setting a mission for the Tarot Club. Let's see if Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man have any solutions… Perhaps, a large sum of money can tempt that "Mr. A" or some other powerful Beyonders… Klein suddenly had an idea came to him as he thought of the Tarot Club.

With this idea in mind, he calmed down a lot. He found some paper and a pen and wrote the divination statement: "Ian Wright's whereabouts."

After confirming that there were no hidden Beyonders in the room, Klein looked at the curtain that shielded him from prying eyes. He recalled Ian's appearance and silently read out the divination sentence before leaning back into his chair.

He quickly entered a dream and saw a dark, small, run-down room in the dreamy world. There was a bunk bed and a floor mat that four people slept on.

Ian was curled up at the top of the bunk bed, sleeping soundly under an old satchel.

When the dream shattered, Klein opened his eyes and interpreted the revelation.

Living quarters like that only exist in the East Borough and the Backlund Bridge area, but it's an abnormally huge place. Even if all the police in Backlund are deployed, they still wouldn't be able to find it…

Ian was very careful. He didn't leave anything with me. Otherwise, I would've been able to find him through dowsing rod divination…

After a few minutes of consideration, Klein picked up the pen and added a paragraph to each of the divination statements, making it an excuse:

"I don't know Ian Wright's whereabouts. I haven't seen him since we found Zreal's body."

That piece of paper was left on the desk with a pen pressed against its edge.

After all was done, Klein got up and went back to his bed, making a quick, less obvious flick of the coin to make sure that no one was watching him.

After obtaining a negative answer, he quickly took four steps counterclockwise, chanted the incantation, and entered the world above the gray fog.

Within the ancient and towering palace, Klein couldn't be bothered to inspect the situation around him, and instead repeated the divination he had just done.

Seeing that the negative answer hadn't changed, he stopped feeling so nervous. Raising his head to the side, he realized that the core position of the newly added crimson star had been dyed with a sun-like gold.

"Is this the source of the warmth I felt?" Klein spread out his spirituality and gingerly touched it in response to the prayer.

A blurry scene quickly appeared in front of his eyes.

The petite lady he had tried to pull up above the gray fog was standing in front of an altar with a lady with slightly curled brown hair. A man wearing a white mask softly chanted the honorary name of the Eternal Blazing Sun, creating a warm and pure light.

Was she trying to get someone to do an exorcism? Klein almost laughed.

At that moment, he finally understood the reason behind the previous situation. It wasn't that someone had penetrated the gray fog and locked onto him. It was similar to Justice and company reciting his honorary name before making a prayer. And after the gray fog received the message, it automatically give him feedback. However, since it wasn't a prayer, the illusory, overlapping voices ended up becoming a warm current.

Notification. This is a notification, and not something that can cause harm or influence… Klein made a definite judgment.

At the same time, he was roughly certain of one thing. The way the mysterious space above the gray fog connected with Justice and the others wasn't absolutely abnormal or above the rules of this world. It still suffered particular restrictions that could cause effects of varying degrees by using specific methods.

Klein continued watching the scene before him and listened to the voice speaking. He was surprised to find that it lasted longer than ever before.

Before this, he wouldn't be able to take the initiative to spy on the corresponding target of the crimson stars, unless the other party had prayed for it, and only then would he be able to receive the corresponding scene.

In another situation, when he gave his feedback, he would be able to see the scene and hear synchronized voices at the same time. However, once the response ended, he would no longer be able to gain any additional information.

Now, it was like watching a long video whose footage was filled with mosaicked reality TV footage.

He saw the petite lady talking to a man in a golden mask in the study, heard her companions address her as Xio, and realized that she was looking for the Beyonder potion corresponding to the Sheriff's potion.

It wasn't until the two women returned home that Klein felt regretful that he failed to identify their address. The "recording" thus came to an end.

Watching the gradually dissipating gold colors, he nodded his head thoughtfully. He vaguely understood why such an anomaly had appeared.

*In other words, the power of purification helped me maintain the corresponding passageway? Xio's thirty pounds was worth it… I wonder when I'll be able to maintain it myself… *Klein shook his head and smiled. He took out a pen and a paper to continue to divine Ian Wright's whereabouts.

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CHAPTER 234
THE NIGHT OF THE FULL MOON.

It was the same dream divination, but this time Klein saw more.

The first scene was still the small, dark, squalid room with Ian Wright sleeping soundly on a bunk bed.

The second scene was the same sewer they had both gone to. Ian squatted in front of Zreal's mutilated body, reached out with his hand to rub the two rows of white teeth, and removed one of them.

The third scene was a busy and noisy street. The passersby were all dressed in plain clothes, some of which that could be described as old and tattered.

In the middle of the street, there were gardens and lawns, surrounded by low chimneys that were puffing out smoke. Ian, in his old overcoat and round hat, warily watched as he entered the telegraph office not far from the center of the street. Diagonally across it was the mall entrance to the steam metro.

The image quickly turned transparent. Klein opened his eyes, tapped his index finger on the edge of the long bronze table and made a preliminary judgment.

From that tooth and the telegram, it seems that Zreal and Ian aren't just a detective duo that found themselves involved in a dangerous situation. They have an organization behind them!

I should be able to determine where the third scene is…

Klein was in no hurry to deeply analyze it, as he didn't want to stay too long above the fog.

Leaving the high back chair belonging to The Fool, he went to a corner, rummaged through the paper bag that he had been placed there previously, and found Meursault's Beyonder characteristic.

Holding the crimson, jelly-like object, Klein sat down again and wrote a new divination statement: "The corresponding potion name."

As he silently recited the statement, he held onto the Beyonder characteristic with one hand and the piece of paper with the divination statement in the other. With the help of Cogitation, he fell into a deep sleep.

In the gray, dreamy dream, the ambassador who was dressed to the nines, appeared again before Klein with his thin, stubbly face.

Holding a bottle of crimson liquid, he said to Meursault, "Drink it, drink this Hunter potion, and you'll rule the Zmanger gang. Of course, money is also indispensable, as Emperor Roselle once said—a stick in one hand and a carrot in the other."

"Hunter? Backlund is a huge metropolitan city…" Meursault frowned and asked curiously.

To someone illiterate like him, hunters were associated with the wilderness and animals.

The middle-aged ambassador chuckled and said, "The biggest city is the largest dark forest.

"Here, everyone has two identities. One, the prey, and the other, the hunter.

"Even the weakest hunter is a hunter. It's possible for them to harm stronger prey.

"Go, join this magnificent hunt."

…

The scene shattered and turned into countless specks of light. Klein looked down at the crimson Beyonder characteristic in his hand and said to himself silently, *So it's the Hunter potion. It's no wonder Meursault was so good at fighting. He even used a blowpipe to shoot poison darts.*

It's no wonder how he was able to track me here…

However, he doesn't seem to fully understand the essence of being a Hunter. He didn't set any traps ahead of time or use any weapons. He didn't put his advantages to use… This is partly because he didn't know that I'm also a Beyonder, one that happens to be a Sequence 8. He underestimated me. It's also evident that he only recently consumed the potion…

The Hunter pathway is both wielded by the former Intis royal family, the Sauron family, and the Feysac Empire's rulers, the Einhorn family, as well as the secret organization, the Iron and Blood Cross Order, which appeared in the past two to three centuries. Taking into account his attire, that ambassador's identity can essentially be confirmed… a high-ranking diplomat of the Intis Republic, an ambassador of the Loen Kingdom…

I wonder what that important item he's trying to get his hands on is…

As his mind churned, Klein wrapped himself in his spirituality and began the rapid descent.

As soon as he returned to his room, he immediately checked his surroundings vigilantly, but he didn't notice any unusual changes.

Phew. Klein let out a silent breath. He felt a bit more confident that he would be able to convene the members of the Tarot Club on time tomorrow afternoon.

He rummaged through the map of Backlund that he had bought on the steam locomotive, looking for a telegraph office that was along the subway line, one that wasn't far from the middle of the street.

There were only a few subway lines in Backlund, so Klein quickly identified three targets: one in West Borough, one in St. George Borough, and one at the junction of East Borough and the Backlund Bridge.

He recalled how most of the pedestrians in his dream were dressed to determined their socioeconomic statuses and arrived at the final answer.

The third spot!

The place where the East Borough intersected with the Backlund Bridge!

Sometimes, interpreting a revelation requires a plethora of practical knowledge and the ability to infer… Klein mocked himself, walked to the desk, and added another sentence after the previous statement, adding more to the contents written on the piece of paper.

I don't know where Ian is. I haven't seen him since we discovered Zreal's corpse. However, I learned through my own channels that Ian Wright had appeared at the telegraph office on Bacardi Street.

After he finished writing, Klein didn't fold the piece of paper and put it away. Nor did he burn it with his spirituality. Instead, he allowed it to remain spread out on the desk, freely revealing its contents.

After giving it a deep look, Klein went back to the bed and took off his clothes to sleep.

Outside the tightly closed curtains, the crimson moon peeked out from the layers of clouds, shining brightly and perfectly.

…

In a house at Hillston Borough.

Fors, who didn't sleep with Xio, sat up suddenly and put her hands to her head.

Her relatively pretty face was extremely twisted as if she was a devil.

Fors pressed against her ears and constantly tossed about in bed, as though she was resisting the illusory muttering.

Sweat trickled down her forehead, and veins bulged on the back of her hands.

Her body randomly tensed up or rolled. Her originally teasing and languid pale blue eyes were filled with pain.

In the depths of those pupils, countless layers of light and shadows seemed to appear.

"No!" Fors finally couldn't hold it in anymore as she let out a low tragic cry.

Her hands stopped covering her ears and resorted to yanking at her hair, as though she was going to fight pain with pain.

After a few minutes of writhing, she finally stopped.

She released her hands, looked at the handful of slightly curled brown hair, and weakly laughed at herself.

"I lied to Xio, telling her that the murmurs every full moon don't have much of a negative effect on me… At least losing hair is a serious concern…”

With difficulty, Fors sat up and looked at the curtain that half covered the window. Through it, she could see the dreamy crimson moon outside.

"It's getting worse each and every time. Will I lose control the next time because of this…" Fors could no longer suppress the weakness that she had buried deep in her heart.

She had attempted to separate herself from the bracelet that allowed people to teleport through the spiritual world, but it no longer resulted in the disappearance of the murmurs during a full moon.

She had tried to take sedatives, had tried chanting the name of the God of Steam and Machinery, had tried some ritualistic magic, but it hadn't changed the fact that she was gradually slipping into the abyss.

"If only I could understand what the murmurs are saying… I wish to die in the know, and not be buried clueless… P-perhaps, I might be able to hear it clearer after advancing to Sequence 8? But I've never encountered anyone selling the Trickmaster potion formula." Fors looked out the window in a daze as her eyes were dyed red by the moonlight.

…

On Monday morning, Klein woke up early from his restless sleep and got out of bed.

He went to his desk and began to draw the curtains and open the window to let the light and wind into the room.

At that moment, he caught sight of the paper on the desk at the corner of his eye.

It was facing the window, maintaining its original spot.

However, Klein clearly remembered that before he slept, this piece of paper was facing the chair and the bed!

It had flipped over and changed orientation after a night's sleep!

Klein's pupils constricted as he abruptly reached out and pulled the curtains open. He saw that the oriel windows were still shut tight, not letting even a waft of wind in!

Without any wind, the paper had rotated hundred and eighty degrees by itself!

No, someone came in without me noticing! Klein felt a chill run up his spine to his head.

He was shocked that he didn't realize it while sleeping!

This meant that he was almost at the mercy of others, and his life and death depended solely on the other party's mood and thoughts!

Was it a member of the military's special department, or was it a powerful Beyonder sent by the ambassador? From the fact that the paper wasn't returned to its original orientation, it's more likely to be the latter, indicating a certain level of warning… To be able to sneak in like that without a trace, how incredible… Should I thank him for his kindness? No, there must be a reason why he didn't do something that could've been so conveniently accomplished… They don't want to alarm the members of the military's special department who are monitoring the area? Klein couldn't help but think of countless reasons.

The reason he wrote those words last night and spread the paper on the desk, was to let others see it. He wanted to let the ambassador know what he wanted to know and delay any possible acts of revenge until the matter was over so that he himself could have more time to prepare.

However, Klein had expected that the other party would sneak into the room while he was out, and when the surveillance of his house by the special military department would be reduced. Who knew that the person in

question was able to bypass the Beyonders around him and quietly enter the bedroom while he was still sleeping.

The feeling of having his fate controlled by someone else was extremely uncomfortable!

A Beyonder who's very powerful or with extremely odd abilities… Klein turned his back and faced away from the oriel window and pulled out a copper penny.

"Someone sneaked into this room last night."

…

He silently chanted the statement, and with the help of his body's concealment, he flicked the coin.

The coin tumbled in the air and fell without exceeding Klein's shoulder height and landed in his open palm.

This time, the number faced up.

It was a negative result.

No one had sneaked into Klein's bedroom last night!

The paper wouldn't have turned around for no reason… Could it be sleepwalking? No, I can even stay awake after the Captain invaded my dream… Klein suddenly frowned and thought of two possibilities.

First, the divination was disrupted and resulted in misleading results.

Two, the one who sneaked in was not human!

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CHAPTER 235
THE BUSY MONDAY

Klein was in no hurry to confirm his general assumptions. He pretended that nothing had happened and turned the page so that it faced him.

The information he wrote about Ian Wright was completely true. He would still get a positive answer even if he used divination techniques to confirm. Therefore, he believed that the people under the ambassador's charge would follow this investigations trail and gain something in return. It was unlikely that they would have the motivation to seek revenge on him for the time being.

Similarly, he would continue to spread the paper out on his desk for the military's special department who were monitoring him. It would direct their attention away from him as they shifted their focus to Ian Wright. It would then be a race against time to find him before the ambassador.

This way, Klein would be even safer.

It feels like I'm walking on a tightrope. Is this a Clown's special trick? He shook his head in amusement. He opened the oriel window, hoping to take in the fresh morning air, but there was thick, choking smog outside that made him quietly close the windows.

Pressing down the paper with Ian's information with an ink bottle, Klein went to the closest bathroom and quickly washed up. He then picked up the black double-breasted suit and the half top hat that hung from the rack and walked all the way to the first floor.

He had an appointment with Lawyer Jurgen for breakfast today.

Pulling his black silver inlaid cane from the umbrella stand in the foyer, Klein walked along the edge of the street in a thick fog that provided visibility of no more than ten meters until he reached 58 Minsk Street. He rang the doorbell of the dark house.

As the clanging sound echoed, a black green-eyed cat with a raised tail suddenly appeared in his mind.

Brody the black cat walked straight to the door. After preparing itself for two seconds, it leaped up and grabbed the handle of the door.

Then, it inevitably fell and twisted the handle with its weight, and opened the door.

With a creak, the morning wind blew in, and the door slowly opened.

Brody the black cat glanced at Klein haughtily as it walked to the side.

"What a clever cat," Klein praised as he faced the old lady, Doris, in her white apron.

Doris laughed as her wrinkles eased.

"It depends on its mood. Most of the time it acts stupid, as though it doesn't know what you're talking about. Oh, I've prepared my best bean turnip soup for you. Eat it with bread."

Bean turnip soup… Sounds like something randomly mashed together… Klein smiled.

"I'm looking forward to it."

The lawyer came out of the bathroom. Even at home, regardless if he had just woken up, he was dressed to the nines. His white shirt was ironed and his brownish-yellow vest was tightly fitted, the lines of his trousers appearing to be freshly ironed.

"The contract you wanted is complete. Check to see if there are any omissions." Jurgen's blue eyes swept over. He didn't make small talk as he went straight to the point.

His brown hair was neatly combed back, and the sheen from the pomade was unmistakable.

"Alright." Klein leaned his cane, took off his hat and coat, and followed Jurgen into the study on the first floor, where he received a thick contract.

He stood there, casually flipping through it. The more he read, the more his head hurt. In the end, he only skimmed through the key clauses.

I hope that everything that's needed is in there, as well as the previously omitted clauses, such as the establishment of the three instances that will determine how much money is to be supplied to Leppard based on his progress, rather than a lump sum payment of 100 pounds. The first instance involves 50 pounds… Yes, that way I won't have to go to the Backlund Bank for the time being and take out the remaining hundred pounds from my anonymous account. What I have on me is enough…

Klein closed the document, smiled at Jurgen, and said, "I'm satisfied. Your professional skills are better than I imagined."

As he said that, he took out two one-pound notes that he had prepared.

Jurgen took the money, gave Klein the remaining contracts, and said in a serious tone, "If an error is made during the signing, there are two extra copies. Remember to shred the remaining contracts when everything is over."

The current iteration of shredding machines was a hand-cranked mechanical shredder.

Klein was about to nod his head, when Mrs. Doris suddenly shouted from the dining room, "Good lads, it's time for breakfast!"

"My grandmother's hearing has deteriorated," Jurgen explained as he invited Klein with a hand gesture.

Klein followed him into the dining room and saw that Mrs. Doris had scooped out a spoonful of yellow and green liquid from a black pot and poured it onto the corresponding plate.

"Here, try the bean turnip soup. Here's your bread." Mrs. Doris smiled and pointed to the suspicious pile of food.

Klein looked at Jurgen who looked even more serious than before. His heart skipped a beat.

Forcing himself to sit, Klein broke off a piece of white bread, dipped it in the yellow-green soup, and stuffed it into his mouth with the spirit of an adventurer.

"…” He was surprised to find that the flavor was actually quite good. The faint salty taste had a sweet tang to it that stimulated his appetite. It also perfectly brought out the soft, fragrant flavor of the bread.

"My grandmother was once an excellent cook," Jugen said casually as he slowly savored his breakfast.

…Then why do you have to keep a straight face… I really don't have any appetite watching you eat… Klein lampooned silently before immersing himself into the relaxed and happy feelings brought by the delicacy.

After leaving the Jurgens, he made three transfers to Sird Street in St. George Borough, where he made a formal agreement and paid Leppard the first fifty pound. The second sum of thirty pounds would be paid in two weeks' time, depending on Leppard's progress.

At this point, Klein was left with only 21 pounds 8 soli.

Then, he returned to Cherwood Borough and went to the public library to read the Tussock Times of the past year in search of news regarding the Intis ambassador to the Loen Kingdom.

When it was almost noon, he finally saw the black-and-white photo and confirmed that it was the one he had seen in his dream divination.

"Bakerland Jean Madan," Klein recited the Intis Republic's ambassador's name silently. He left the library and found a small restaurant for lunch.

…

At ten minutes to three, Klein pretended to take a nap. He drew the curtains, took four steps in the counterclockwise direction, and arrived above the gray fog.

He first divined if the military's special department had relaxed their surveillance on him and received a positive result. He then wrote a divination statement that he had thought of in the morning: "The infiltrator from last night."

Leaning back in his chair, he muttered the sentence. Klein's eyelids drooped as he fell asleep.

His bedroom came into view in a world of illusion, separation, and obscurity.

At that moment, Klein saw a black shadow squirming in the crack at the bottom of the door!

A slender, iron-black threadworm drilled its way into the room. It arched at the center and then flattened itself, constantly repeating it as it proceeded towards the desk.

Its movements were extremely stiff, as though it had broken down a series of slow motions, making it appear quite odd.

The black threadworm crept to the front of the desk and crawled to the top, leaving a trail of quickly evaporating mucus behind.

It stopped at the written piece regarding Ian Wright. Its head lifted up as the middle of its body rose, leaving only the tail to support the body.

At this moment, it was just like a human!

After examining it for a moment, the black-iron threadworm turned the paper around and disappeared back the way it came from.

So that was the case… That is to say, it wasn't that the infiltrator didn't want to take revenge on me last night; he simply didn't have the ability to do so… Unless this iron-black threadworm is highly venomous… Klein nodded in enlightenment, he then used divination and obtained confirmation that the Beyonder who manipulated the black-iron threadworm had done so under Ambassador Bakerland's orders.

After doing all of this, he completely covered the paper bag in the corner with gray fog and sent a message to The Sun, Derrick.

When the hands of the pocket watch were in place, Klein pulled in Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun at the same time.

This week's Tarot Club happened as scheduled!

…

The familiar gray fog and blurry human silhouettes appeared. Audrey, who had successfully advanced to Sequence 8, half stood up, lifted her skirt, and happily greeted them, "Good afternoon, Mr. Fool~ Good afternoon, Mr. Hanged Man! Good afternoon, Mr. Sun!"

Klein, who had activated his Spirit Vision earlier, noticed the change in the surface layer of the Astral Projection in the depths of Miss Justice's Ether

Body with the help of the gray fog's uniqueness. With a chuckle, he said, "Welcome, our 'Miss Telepathist.'"

Audrey smiled reservedly and said a few words of humility before turning to face the person across her.

"Mr. Hanged Man, you should be handing this week's six pages."

*Perhaps, when Mr. Fool reads it, he will think of something and shares with us a little more of his "general knowledge"…*The corners of her mouth curled up in anticipation.

Alger nodded and began to produce the six pages of Roselle's diary with Klein's help.

Previously, he had thought about consulting The Fool about whether he should directly submit the rest of the diary via a sacrifice. However, seeing that The Fool didn't seem too interested or take the initiative to mention it, he gave up on this idea.

And this was in line with his understanding of The Fool. Roselle's diary had a certain effect on the godlike-man—Mr. Fool—but it wasn't that great. He would collect it, but he definitely wasn't in a rush.

The six pages of the diary were completed very quickly. As Alger was about to offer it to The Fool who sat at the end of the long bronze table, he suddenly remembered something. He hurriedly said respectfully, "Mr. Fool, I have obtained a piece of information related to the Secret Order."

There was no obstruction of information on the ocean; it just wasn't timely enough.

The pirates also valued intelligence and often sent people to the colonial island to exchange information that they had gathered. It was through these channels that Alger learned something about the Secret Order.

"Very good." Klein nodded his head slightly, giving his permission to The Hanged Man to recount what he knew. He didn't stop the presence of Miss Justice and The Sun from letting him speak.

This would help the former gather more information about the Secret Order, while the latter understood nothing.

At the same time, he allowed the six-page diary to appear in his hands.

The Hanged Man said unhurriedly, "The Secret Order has some connection with the Intis Republic."

*The Intis Republic. Yes, Emperor Republic was from Intis, and Zaratul had sought him out in Trier, the capital of Intis… The Secret Order was also involved in the famous incident at Intis… Well, it's not too surprising that the Secret Order still has some connection with the Intis Republic today… *After validating this new piece of information with what he knew, Klein confirmed that the information provided by The Hanged Man was true.

*Heh, just in time, I'm going to deal with the ambassador of the Intis Republic… *Klein was in no hurry to read Roselle's diary. He looked up at the three members.

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CHAPTER 236
INTERNAL COMMISSION

As Klein's knowledge of mysticism and Beyonders deepened, as well as his experiments with some of the powers of the space above the gray fog, he no longer felt anxious when facing Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun. He became less preoccupied with maintaining an enigmatic and unfathomable image so as to prevent the Tarot Club members from keenly noticing his facade.

He now knew that although the deities in this world were powerful and bizarre, they were by no means omniscient and omnipotent. This description was something that only the legendary Creator of everything could do, one that only the City of Silver was still worshiping.

The deities had their limitations, and the deities could also be put into tough situations. That was something Klein could now confirm. Be it The Book of Storms or The Revelation of Evernight, they more or less touched upon this.

Therefore, at the recent Tarot Gathering, Klein was consciously building "character traits," slowly shaping himself into a restricted powerhouse who, for some reason, couldn't move freely but was almost a deity.

This way, even if he occasionally showed that he didn't understand certain things and occasionally asked for help, it wouldn't arouse the suspicion of the Tarot Club members.

Of course, the premise of all this was that, through his previous attempts and through the power displayed by his "adorer," Azik, he had undoubtedly embedded the image of a deity-like existence into the minds of Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun.

Phew, I hope that this building of character traits will succeed. That way, I won't have to worry about not being able to answer their questions in the future… Of course, things that are part of "general knowledge" still have to be known, and I shouldn't show fear… Klein tapped the edge of the ancient table and said with a chuckle, "I want to issue a mission."

Mission? Audrey's ears pricked up slightly as her eyes widened. She was astonished, expectant, and perturbed at the same time.

She clearly remembered that this was the first time that Mr. Fool had officially issued a mission!

*Although "He" had previously made a few requests, they all involved prepaid rewards. It seemed like "He" had randomly selected missions to conform to the principle of equal exchange… This time, He used the word "issue"…*As a Telepathist, Audrey was already very good at reading the hidden meanings behind words.

At the same time, she keenly realized that although The Hanged Man appeared to remain unperturbed, he was actually abnormally tense. As for The Sun, he seemed to be muddle-headed, treating this as a very normal thing.

"You can choose to accept it or not." With the help of his Clown's powers, Klein's tone sounded much more relaxed. "Another adorer of mine has arrived in Backlund. He wants to finish a matter, but it's not convenient for him to show himself."

Another adorer… The Hanged Man nodded, seemingly in thought. He wasn't surprised at all.

In his eyes, for a powerful godlike existence like Mr. Fool, possessing many adorers was a matter of fact.

I wonder what the Sequence number of Mr. Fool's adorer is… Well, I still owe "His" previous adorer a reward… Even though Mr. Fool's reward was

paid by Mr. Hanged Man, and "He" doesn't really care about money, I did pray for help at that time. Furthermore, Rear Admiral Hurricane was killed by that adorer…"His" adorer would still need some funds for their activities… Audrey thought with some guilt.

Frankly speaking, thirty thousand gold pounds and a large plantation was an enormous amount of wealth to her, but that alone didn't have any significant effect on her life.

It's good having it, but it didn't matter if I didn't. Well, I might feel the pinch a little… Audrey nodded to herself earnestly.

As a teenage girl who wasn't considered an adult yet, ignoring the large plantation, she actually didn't have absolute control over the remaining thirty thousand pounds. She could only go with her father's arrangements, purchasing some stocks from Backlund Munitions Corporation and invest in a company that was attempting to spinoff some of the technology in ironclad warships for commercial ships.

The amount she ultimately received and could be used as an allowance was only 5000 pounds. However, her fixed annuity had increased by at least 2000 pounds from its original range of 15,000 to 25,000 pounds.

Seeing that Justice and the others hadn't spoken, Klein issued the mission.

"The task he wants to be completed is the assassination of the Intis Republic ambassador to the Loen Kingdom, Bakerland Jean Madan."

"Assassinate the Intis Republic's ambassador!?" Audrey lost her composure as she asked in surprise.

This would cause conflict between the two countries and might even be an act of war! As a qualified aristocratic lady, her first thought was about international foreign affairs.

As for why Mr. Fool didn't do so himself, she found the answer obvious.

Which mighty figure would always be helping their subordinates?

After the Kingdom suffered defeat at the east coast of Balam, the King didn't personally set off. At most, the general would be replaced and new troops deployed.

*Hmm, rumor has it that His Majesty wanted to set off for the frontline, but was stopped by the nobles and officials… *

Alger was only mildly surprised by the task; his focus was on another matter.

Mr. Fool is indeed unable to strongly interfere with the real world… My guess is right… I wonder to what extent can "He" influence us after establishing our connection… Can "He" easily take one's life away? Alger, a little pleased with himself, began to let his thoughts wander.

Derrick blanked out listening to the conversation.

What's the Intis Republic? What's an ambassador? These words sound so strange in Jotun!

Klein swept his gaze around and maintained his casual attitude.

"Which one of you is willing to accept this mission?

"What kind of reward do you want?"

Eh… I can't convince myself to kill an innocent man for no reason. And it could very well lead to a disaster, a disaster caused by war… Audrey, who wanted to raise her hand, hesitated.

Just then, The Hanged Man chuckled and said, "I've heard that this Ambassador Bakerland is also the intelligence chief of the Intis Republic in the Kingdom. He secretly supports bloodshed, planned a number of incidents that destroyed the relationship between the nobility and the rich,

and spread rumors to incite the public into standing against the government."

He seemed to notice the hesitation in Justice, so he described the dark side of Bakerland in detail.

Then, he added, "I'm not sure if the ambassador is a Beyonder, but there are many clues that suggest he may very well be.

"He has quite a number of Beyonders around him, Beyonders that come under the Intis intelligence web. And this department is influenced by the original royal family in Intis, the Sauron family. They're in control of the early Sequences of the Hunter pathway.

"Moreover, the possibility of a war between the two countries depends only on whether or not the upper echelons of both sides want to fight. It has nothing to do with the life or death of a diplomat."

After the assassination of Emperor Roselle, Intis suffered several great shocks but ultimately managed to maintain a stable republican system. Because the Sauron family suffered a brutal blow during Roselle's reign, their strength fell tremendously in all aspects. All they could do was accept the reality and change their goal to fighting for a seat in parliament and secretly influence the country's intelligence department and parts of the army.

After listening to the information provided by The Hanged Man, the hesitation in Audrey's heart disappeared. She gracefully nodded and said, "For the past few years, the Feysac Empire has expanded rapidly, having defeated the Kingdom and the Intis Republic on the Balam east coast and the Highlands. As long as we push the blame to them, the higher-ups and the citizens of the Intis Empire, it will be something acceptable and believable."

Audrey didn't know much about politics, but with her father being a Member of Parliament in the House of Lords, she still knew certain things.

Be it the shirking of responsibility or shifting the focus onto the Kingdom's internal problems, the unpopular northern barbarians were the popular and easiest targets for the nobles and ministers.

Whether they did it or not didn't matter.

Of course, more than a hundred years ago, this role was played by Intis and Roselle.

After pondering for a few seconds, Audrey looked at the seat of honor, feeling a little perturbed and a little guilty.

"Mr. Fool, I can attempt to complete this mission, but I cannot guarantee its success."

On the one hand, she was going to find her father and confirm that Ambassador Bakerland was really the head of the Intis intelligence service. On the other hand, she wasn't going to do it herself either. As a Spectator or a Telepathist, neither one of them was good at combat, and all she could do was gather as much information about Ambassador Backlund from high society as she could and delegate the mission.

Well, I could get Xio and Fors to ask Mr. A to do it… Or find the hosts of the other Beyonder circles… I cannot be exposed. Things have to be kept secret, and there might be Intis intelligence agents lurking in those circles. I don't know how much money I'll have to pay, but 5000 pounds might not be enough… Audrey was already beginning to think of the subsequent plans.

Klein didn't pin his hopes on Sequence 8—Miss Justice—to succeed. He nodded and said, "What compensation would you like?"

"The formula to the Psychiatrist potion," Audrey said before hesitantly adding, "as well as the corresponding Beyonder ingredients. Oh, we can wait until the mission is completed before discussing further. If it doesn't succeed, I'll bear the expenses. I-I still ow-owe your adorer the bounty money."

Bounty money? So it was given to Miss Justice… 10,000 pounds. That's 5000 if we split it equally… Shrouded in the gray fog, Klein pondered for a few seconds on how much Ambassador Bakerland was worth and finally decided that he was definitely more valuable than Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos.

"Sure," Klein replied in a normal tone.

At this moment, The Hanged Man Alger added, "I'll also accept this mission. The compensation can be determined after the mission is completed."

"Didn't you return to the sea?" Audrey asked in surprise.

"Just because I'm not in Backlund doesn't mean I can't kill Ambassador Bakerland," Alger said with a smile without giving any detailed explanations.

Derrick, who was beside him, never had the chance to join in on the conversation.

Klein nodded in agreement.

"Okay."

He immediately turned his gaze to the Roselle diary in his hands.

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CHAPTER 237
SEQUENCE 2

"29th October. The leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul, visited me once again. He didn't mention anything specific and just casually chatted with me. I wasn't able to guess his true intentions. It seems like he just wanted to strengthen the communication between us and understand each other better?

"I've already met the two High-Sequence Beyonders from the Church, but I felt that Zaratul was much more powerful and mysterious than them, so I asked him what Sequence number he was without much hope, and in the end, he actually answered me!

"He told me that he was a Sequence 2, Miracle Invoker!

"Sequence 2? In the Church's categorization, that's the position of an angel, close to that of a deity!

"He truly is more powerful than the Alchemist and Arcane Scholar that I met before!

"But my intuition tells me that Zaratul isn't telling the whole truth. Sequence 2 might just be his former position, or that he's about to advance.

"Miracle Invoker? A master at creating miracles? The name of this potion makes one's imagination run wild!

"This is the corresponding Sequence 2 of Seer, a Miracle Invoker who controls fate?

"I tried probing Zaratul if the word miracle refers to the miracle of fate? That the Seer pathway is one that slowly understands and grasps fate so as to control it?

"Zaratul ignored the first question. He told me that fate is just one of the parts of the Seer pathway, and it's not even its main focus. The pathway that truly represents fate is Monster!

"He raised a few examples which were all potion names of the Monster Sequence. Sequence 7 The Lucky, Sequence 5 The Lucky, Sequence 2 Soothsayer, and Sequence 1 Snake of Mercury! It's also known as the Snake of Fate.

"This was the first Sequence 1 I got to know. It hit me right in the face!

"According to what I know, the Monster pathway should be controlled by the Life School of Thought. This school seems to also have parts of the Apothecary Sequence pathway. They propose three major divisions, the world of absolute rationality, the world of the spirit, and the material world. Yea, it's pretty cool.

"Zaratul told me that the Life School of Thought specializes in astromancy, seeking to use medicine, music, light, wine, and fragrance, to eliminate paths with unfavorable star readings and fate. They believe that disasters and diseases are caused by the loss of balance between man and nature, as well as the balance between man and his own mind.

"He added meaningfully that the Life School of Thought worships the moon.

"Why worship the moon and not go one step further, the Evernight Goddess?"

This diary took up two pages and was clearly copied from both sides of the original.

That's a lot of information… Klein sighed in heartfelt silence.

This was also the first time he was learning of a Sequence 1 potion's name.

Snake of Mercury and Snake of Fate really made one feel a pining for!

Similarly, it's my first time learning of a Sequence 2. I now know the corresponding Sequence 2 of Seer… The name Miracle Invoker sounds pretty good. It contains deep meaning and doesn't sound lowly. Of course, compared to Soothsayer, it does seem a little inferior…

Fate is only part of the Seer pathway and it's not even its main focus. I have to remember this. I should constantly reflect on myself and not end up steering towards fate. It might result in the failure of my "acting"… Zaratul's words don't seem contradictory… The Monster pathway is the real path of fate… So, Soothsayer is a Sequence 2. If that's the case, then I already knew of a Sequence 2 in the past…

Although he didn't take his eyes off the paper, Klein was seriously considering his own Sequence chain.

Due to his experience in digesting the two potions, "Seer" and "Clown," and because he could spy and revere fate, he was able to be a little prescient regarding fate. However, he would still be helpless toward the development of fate. He had slowly been equating the essence of his Beyonder pathway to fate. If it wasn't for this diary, it was very likely that he would've used this as a premise to comprehend and "act" for the subsequent Sequences.

As for whether or not Zaratul was lying, what Klein was certain of was that the Monster pathway was definitely the Sequence of Fate, which was consistent with what he had seen from the confidential information of the Nighthawks and with the potion name he had heard of earlier, "Soothsayer."

Now that there was a Fate Sequence, the "Seer" pathway was unlikely to be a repeat. This would result in some degree of overlapping, and it would be

inconsistent with how each of the current Sequences had different characteristics.

Therefore, Klein was inclined to believe what Zaratul had said. He was inclined to believe that fate was only part of the Seer's pathway, not even its main focus.

The value of these two pages is invaluable to the present me… The Alchemist and the Arcane Scholar should be the higher Sequences of the Savant pathway. From Roselle's tone, they definitely don't belong to Sequence 2 and 1. That is to say, they are Sequence 4 and Sequence 3… For the time being, it's impossible to determine which is Sequence 4 and which is Sequence 3… Klein gathered his thoughts, flipped the diary, and continued reading.

As for why the Life School of Thought only worshiped the moon and didn't believe in the Evernight Goddess which symbolized the crimson moon, he was unable to ponder too deeply about it due to the lack of information.

The third page was Roselle's recount of inventing a practical steam engine. At times, he was afraid of suffering crackdowns, and at other times, afraid that the fruits of his labor would be seized by powerful figures. His words displayed his fear of being persecuted.

To think that even Emperor Roselle, who thought of himself as the protagonist of an era, would have such a perturbed and worried side to him… The corners of Klein's mouth twitched as he flipped to the fourth page of the diary.

"18th April. Matilda is pregnant.

"It's to be expected, and I can even tell you exactly which love-making session she conceived in, because I felt a decrease in my Beyonder characteristic.

"Once the conception is successful, my own Beyonder characteristic will follow a mysterious connection, and part of it will be transferred to my child.

"After that, I asked Archbishop Fan Esti worriedly. He told me that this is a normal phenomenon. For Sequence 7 and below, Beyonder characteristics will not be passed on to the next generation, but it isn't absolute, Sequence 6 and 5 will naturally pass down a portion, but it will not affect the parent's strength. As for the child, they would be born with certain Beyonder powers, close to that of Sequence 9. But as a result, their pathway is basically fixed.

"At high Sequences, the inheritance of Beyonder characteristics is something one can control. One can choose to pass down or not, or one can even choose to pass down just a little bit, a third, half, or all of them.

"In other words, the children born from High-Sequence Beyonders might be born as Beyonders. As for the Sequence number, it's up to either one of the parents to decide.

"I wonder if the descendants of the deities are like this as well…"

After reading the diary, there were only two phrases in Klein's mind: "Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility" and "Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation."

Is the law governing the survival of Beyonder creatures? It's no wonder that some magical animals will reproduce only before they die… It's no wonder there would be the phenomenon of increased killing and bloodlust after childbirth. The target would be of their own race or even their partner. This is to supplement their Beyonder characteristics… According to this logic, if we trace this all the way back, where did the earliest Beyonder characteristics come from? Produced out of thin air? From the Creator who created everything?

Since Miss Justice had already advanced to Telepathist, Klein controlled the urge to nod and continued to leaf through the pages.

The fifth page was Roselle's criticisms about how no one could enjoy his pop music and thought that he was making noise, while at the same time, he mused how refreshing stories was a common pursuit of different people from different worlds, and that the popularity of the novels he plagiarized from The Count of Monte Cristo allowed the newspaper he founded to flourish.

…Emperor, is there anything else you haven't done? With a smile, Klein turned to the sixth and final page.

"10th November, I received the great pirate Savigny Solomon in secret at the White Maple Palace. Solomon. I hope that he will plunder my opponents on the new sea route and strike at the ships of Feysac, Loen, and Feynapotter.

"And I promised to help him advance to a High-Sequence Beyonder.

"The Beyonder pathway of Dark Emperor has names that are as strange as the Demoness pathway—Corruption, Confusion, The Fallen, Disorder… However, in order to match the Dark Emperor, they added on their own suffixes, Baron of Corruption, Mentor of Confusion, Count of The Fallen, and Prince of Disorder.

"In order for Savigny to live up to his name, I decided to confer him the title of Count of the Court in secret.

"Savigny has a child named Nast Solomon, and my intuition tells me that he will dominate the Five Seas in the future."

Nast Solomon… The King of the Five Seas, Nast? Nast, who claims to be a descendant of the Solomon Empire? To think that he was born during the Roselle period! Klein was stunned.

Since Roselle had mentioned the term "new sea route," Klein had easily determined the corresponding year.

It was in 1194 that the new sea route was discovered and the Southern Continent was found, and Roselle was assassinated in 1198. The diary could only have been written between those two years.

That also meant that it was about 151 to 155 years ago.

If Nast, the "King of the Five Seas," was the Nast Solomon, Roselle had spoken of, he's almost 160 years old… Is this due to other reasons, or do High-Sequence Beyonders obtain an extension to their lifespan in the first place… Klein thought seriously.

He gathered his thoughts and let the diary disappear from his hands. He then looked at Justice and said, "You are free to trade or communicate now."

Mr. Fool has no general knowledge to tell us today… Audrey was slightly disappointed. She turned her gaze to Sun and said, "Can I exchange information related to the dragon from you?"

She clearly remembered that Mr. Sun called the Spectator pathway "the Dragon pathway," and that he said it originated from the Dragon race.

"Sure. I want the Sequence 8 potion formula for Bard," answered The Sun, Derrick, who had been silent all this while, in hesitation.

He had wanted to use this as an exchange for information on the world where Justice and The Hanged Man were living so that he wouldn't always be confounded by what he heard. However, seeing that his process of digesting the potion was nearing completion, he still made his advancement his top priority.

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CHAPTER 238
DRAGON OF IMAGINATION

Audrey wasn't surprised by The Sun's request. Since the "acting method" had proliferated in the City of Silver, then the amount of time that had passed suggested that it was likely that he was close to the end of his digestion period. Seeking the subsequent potion formula was definitely one of his highest priorities.

I wonder how the Bard acts? Sing poetry every day? When encountering combat, dodge to the side and use his singing to bring courage and strength to his companions? Or perhaps he would first bless himself before charging forward with a hammer or sword raised? I wonder if it will bring about an improvement in his singing ability. If it's possible, then he would definitely be an outstanding singer or opera singer… Audrey thought with great interest. She purposely didn't express her stance in a hurry, so as to not let The Sun raise the price again.

This wasn't something she learned from her tutor or from the Beyonder gatherings she had attended. It was purely a technique she had developed herself after she had advanced to become a Telepathist.

"I will try my best to find the Sequence 8 potion formula corresponding to the Bard pathway, but it won't be today. Are you satisfied with this condition?" Audrey said in deliberation before looking at the seat of honor at the ancient table. "We can seek Mr. Fool's help to bear witness to this agreement."

At that moment, Klein laughed and replied, "Miss Justice, perhaps I can provide the Light Suppliant formula for you."

Audrey's eyes lit up as she quickly nodded slightly.

"No problem! Then, what should I use to exchange with you?"

I haven't thought of it yet… Klein chuckled and said, "Don't worry; perhaps my adorers will require help in certain matters in the future."

His thoughts were very simple. If he allowed Miss Justice to obtain the formula of Light Suppliant in her Beyonder circles, then wouldn't the knowledge he had stolen from the Eternal Blazing Sun at the cost of near immolation be for naught?

At the very least, it would be wasted at the Tarot Club!

"Alright, I will do my best to help them!" Audrey promised happily.

Klein pressed his hands together and a yellowish-brown piece of goatskin parchment appeared before him. On it was the formula for the Light Suppliant potion, including substitute ingredients and their ancient names. Furthermore, they were all translated to Jotun.

"Main ingredients: a piece of Brilliance Rock or powder of Dazzling Soul; Blood of a Mirror Hedgehog or the Heart of a Magma Titan; Supplementary ingredients: a Golden-edged Sunflower, three drops of Aconite Juice…"

With a gentle push, the goatskin appeared in front of The Sun.

Although he could pray to Mr. Fool to recall the formula even if he forgot it completely, Derrick still diligently memorized the formula. It took him quite a while before he said, "Miss Justice, we can talk about the dragons."

"Mr. Fool, I seek your permission to speak with Mr. Sun alone." Audrey quickly raised her hand.

She originally believed that The Sun would put the appropriate content on paper for her to read, but it would be inconvenient for her to ask questions.

She would have to pen her questions and push them back to him. Such a way of communication was utterly cumbersome.

Speak with him alone? In such a conversation, you probably wouldn't understand what The Sun is saying; likewise for The Sun… Klein nodded as his voice remained placid.

"Alright."

In the Beyonder circles, Hermes was a language one had to master. Ancient Hermes was something that one could learn and was relatively popular. Jotun, Dragonese, and Elvish were relatively less popular, so few people knew them.

The moment that was said, Klein isolated The Hanged Man, preventing him from seeing or hearing.

Alger had a certain interest in the knowledge of the dragons, but it wasn't enough for him to pay the price of listening, so he kept silent and waited.

Seeing that Mr. Fool had made a gesture for them to start talking, The Sun, Derrick, remained silent for a few seconds, organized his words, and said, "The dragons are mortal enemies of the Giant King. They all look like magnified lizards, and their entire bodies are covered in scales of different colors. Their four limbs are thick and powerful, and their wings are wide enough to drive their giant bodies to flight. They are the rulers of the sky.

"They have a myriad of abilities, some have the ability to breathe fire, others the ability to command lightning, bring corrosion, or even creating frost. But these are not mainstream among the dragons. The Dragon of the Mind occupies the greatest number of dragons with Dragon King Ankewelt as their representative. The Beyonder pathway that stems from the Dragon of the Mind is the Spectator. In the City of Silver, we typically call it the Dragon pathway."

With regards to similar trades, Derrick had initially prepared to regurgitate the historical texts, but upon discovering that Miss Justice and Mr. Hanged Man didn't seem to share the same "world," he gradually realized the value of the widely-known history of the City of Silver. Thus, he only talked about dragons this time and spoke nothing of giants, elves, mutants, phoenixes, vampires, etc.

The King of Dragons Ankewelt… This aligns with the records of the Church… Audrey nodded slightly, politely refraining from interrupting The Sun's narration.

Derrick recalled the contents of his textbook and said, "Back then, the most powerful and most terrifying dragon was the Dragon King Ankewelt, also known as the Dragon of Imagination. Apart from it, his son, Alzuhod blanketed the sky as well, overlooking the famous, powerful figures across the land and sea. Its name was the Dragon of Nightmare.

"Regarding the Dragon of Imagination Ankewelt, there was a legend that whatever he imagined would manifest. The kingdom he imagined would definitely descend upon the material world. The future it declares would definitely play out and become reality."

This… Klein suddenly frowned. If it wasn't for the fact that Justice Audrey was focused on listening to The Sun, she definitely would've noticed his abnormality, even if he was covered by the thick gray fog.

The description made him think of Sealed Artifact 0-08!

*A declared future would definitely play out… They share similar characteristics! *Klein leaned back in his chair; he looked relaxed, but in fact, he was even more focused.

*Dragon of Imagination, how cool… That's the mark of a deity! *Audrey's eyes lit up when she heard him, filled with excitement and anticipation.

Derrick paused for a few seconds before continuing, "Its son, Dragon of Nightmare, Alzuhod, is similarly terrifying. It can control the hearts of every living creature and make them act according to his will. And these living creatures will find it hard to sense it, believing that their actions were of their own will. It will also fabricate real nightmares into reality, causing many living creatures to unknowingly participate in them. It would then give them the cruelest and shocking ends.

"Legend has it that it especially loves mischief, that it will let a prince kiss a princess to wake her up, but the princess has already mostly rotten away. It will make ordinary girls wear dancing shoes and dance in front of the prince, but find themselves unable to do so until their deaths. It will create all kinds of coincidences and push the fates of many living creatures towards tragedy."

*All kinds of coincidences… This sounds even more like a 0-08… Of course, I don't know much about the Sealed Artifact… *Klein resisted the urge to stroke his chin as he made himself look like an immutable ancient well.

"What a vile dragon… However, its abilities are very interesting," Audrey said, half sighing, half excited.

Is this the future of the Spectator pathway? No, I have to call it the Dragon pathway! I don't want to switch to another Sequence! Audrey wished that she could immediately become a Sequence 7 Psychiatrist and continue her rapid advancement.

The Sun Derrick answered sincerely, "It has been two to three thousand years since the history of the dragon and the Giant King. Everything I know comes from textbooks and legends, so there is no guarantee of its authenticity."

"At least your history remains intact." Audrey was in a good mood. "And then?"

"Then? The Creator awoke, and the Dragon of Imagination, the Dragon of Nightmare, and other famous dragons fell from the sky, losing everything, including their lives. This resulted in a lack of sunlight for 49 days, causing countless volcanoes to erupt, as well as tides that drowned everything. And after the dragons declined, they could only hide away in various dangerous areas. Later on, the Giant King was destroyed by the Creator as well," Derrick said in a heavy tone.

This is different from the history I know… Wasn't it the Lord of Storms, Eternal Blazing Sun, and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom who led humanity to defeat the dragons, giants, and kill their kings? Audrey felt confused, as though time and history were somehow out of place.

Klein was also puzzled by this and felt that the true history was riddled with mysteries, especially as it was from the Second Epoch, a time more ancient than history.

Most of the legends recorded in the Church's ancient texts should be fake, but the history of the City of Silver cannot be completely believed… What would real history be like? He gathered his thoughts, smiled and asked, "Is the exchange over?"

"That's all I know," Derrick replied in shame.

He felt that the information he had provided didn't match the value of the Light Suppliant potion formula.

Audrey quietly drew a breath, as the corners of her mouth curved upwards.

"I'm very satisfied."

I know my future direction… she added happily in her mind.

After a few more exchanges, Klein announced the end of this week's Tarot Club.

After sending off Miss Justice and the others, he didn't linger any longer and quickly returned to his bedroom to reduce the risk of being discovered by others.

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Count Hall.

Audrey happily paced back and forth, planning to reward Susie with a few dog treats.

Just then, she heard a knock at the door.

From the sound of her footsteps and the gait, she could tell that it was her personal maid, Annie.

"Come in." Audrey looked at the mirror, smoothed her hair, and straightened her back.

Annie came in with a piece of paper and smiled.

"Miss, a telegram for you came from the Southern Continent."

Southern Continent? Alfred? Audrey suddenly thought of her elder brother, took the paper in delight, and examined it closely.

It was indeed from her second elder brother, Alfred Hall. He had sent a telegram from the east coast of the Balam Empire and it read:

"I've found the Rainbow Salamander you wanted. Two in total. Please await its delivery."

But, I don't need it anymore… Audrey froze, blinked, and turned her head sharply to Susie.

The large golden retriever wagged her tail with a stupefied expression.

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CHAPTER 239
EACH HAVING THEIR OWN "GATHERING"

Well, I don't need it anymore, but I can give it to Susie, and I can exchange it for other Beyonder ingredients. Well, Susie's potion is still short of the spinal fluid from a Farsman Rabbit… Some things are easier left to Susie, it's far more convenient for her than for me… Every "famous detective" needs a good assistant. Uh-huh! Audrey quickly made her decision. To her, this was no longer something she particularly cared about.

As she put down the telegram, her pleasure subsided, and the worries of reality began to emerge.

I still owe Mr. Fool intelligence regarding the Secret Order, the mission to assassinate the Intis ambassador, and a request from his adorer… I've finally experienced the feeling of being riddled in debt… Audrey, we can't delay any longer! Let's start! The girl quietly clenched her fists. She wanted to find a pen and paper and write a letter to Viscount Glaint so that he could arrange for her to meet Xio and Fors as soon as possible. She needed to delegate the mission.

She picked up a fountain pen, dipped it in ink, and suddenly, Audrey held her wrist in midair without writing.

She had just thought of a crucial problem which was that she knew very little about the Intis ambassador Bakerland. In such cases, it was easy to misjudge the difficulty of a mission, either because no one was willing to accept it or because the mission had been entrusted to an unsuitable person, dooming the mission to fail at the very beginning.

The resulting growing cost wasn't her main concern; instead, she believed that The Fool would better reward her and help her even further.

After pondering for a moment, Audrey turned her head to her maidservant, Annie, and said, "Tell Countess Jaria that I accept her invitation and will punctually attend her ball tomorrow evening."

Jaria was the wife of Count Wolfe, and she had invited ambassadors to Loen from every country to her upcoming ball, including Bakerland Jean Madan.

Audrey had planned on declining the invitation with the excuse of being sick, but now she was interested in the ball.

After she observed Ambassador Bakerland and gathered enough information, she would meet with Xio and Fors! Audrey suddenly felt the excitement of participating in a major event that she always dreamed of!

…

First Manor in the Rorsted Archipelago, City of Generosity, Bayam.

Having returned to the real world, Alger Wilson changed into attire that was considered gaudy in the Intis Republic and went through the back door of the hotel into the alley and made several detours.

He stopped in front of a house with no garden or lawn and put on a familiar white mask.

Next, he knocked on the door with three heavy knocks and two light ones, separating them with two lengthy pauses and two short pauses respectively.

After about ten seconds, the door creaked open. A man wearing a pirate's headband stuck his head out and looked around quickly.

"Come in," the man said with a deep voice as he made way.

Without a word, Alger quietly walked into the room.

Creak!

The door slammed shut.

…

At 15 Minsk Street, Klein drew the curtains open and sat down at his desk.

The information about the Secret Order that was given to him by The Hanged Man made him realize that his target might have certain connections to the Intis Republic. At the same time, he was reminded of the words The Hanged Man had used to describe the Antigonus family —"strange" and "terrifying."

The Beyonder who sneaked into my room last night to read the information and leave me a warning was indeed strange… The Sequence pathway that the Antigonus family has in their control is the Seer pathway which the Secret Order possesses. The two can be equated… That is to say, one can speculate that the Beyonder from last night was a member of the Secret Order who works part-time as an Intis Republic spy? Or could the person not be a member of the Secret Order, but someone who used the connection between the Intis Republic and the Secret Order to obtain the corresponding formulas and potions? Klein began to boldly assume that as he carefully tried to verify.

This can explain why my Clown's premonition ability didn't trigger when the strange threadworm intruded. This is the suppression effect of a Beyonder from a higher Sequence that shares the same pathway as me… Of course, it's also possible that the iron-black threadworm posed no concrete threat to me…

Similarly, it can be explained why the threadworm infiltrated my room the same night that I wrote the information regarding Ian Wright. Furthermore,

it went straight for the desk… The other party is equipped with Seer abilities, making matters appear reasonably logical…

After repeatedly verifying his speculation, Klein felt that his guess was very likely close to the truth.

If the person in question is a relatively higher Sequence Beyonder from the Seer pathway, what Sequence number would he be? And what would the potion name be? To have the threadworm in his control, could it be another component of a circus, the Beast Tamer? Klein shook his head in a self-deprecating manner while feeling amused.

Perhaps my subsequent potion formula will be obtained from him… Is this the true meaning of the revelation I received from my former divination? Backlund really is the Land of Hope… Klein muttered a few words to himself and began to consider what to do next.

He had entrusted the task of assassinating the Intis Ambassador Bakerland to put an end to all latent dangers. He had to avoid suspicion, but he didn't have the ability needed to do so.

After Ian Wright's whereabouts were revealed to both sides, he was confident that Ambassador Bakerland wouldn't have time to exact revenge on him in the near future and wouldn't add to his problems.

Finding the extremely important item he mentioned was obviously what he was most concerned about.

In other words, before that item is found, I will be safe. I won't need to rush to hire powerful, Beyonder bodyguards… Hmm, even if there's any follow-up revenge, it's unlikely the ambassador will hire a High-Sequence Beyonder to deal with me. It's neither economical nor necessary; after all, Backlund isn't his home ground…

*The highest possibility is that he would still get the Beyonder who sent the iron-black threadworm to infiltrate my room last night. He would at least be

at Sequence 7, and perhaps even Sequence 6 or 5. He has the strength required and is familiar with the situation… When the time comes, I just need to hire a bodyguard according to this standard… I hope that before then, the Ambassador will never be able to issue such an order… * Klein looked out of the window at the fog which had finally dissipated, seemingly in a daze.

He decided to continue heading to Bravehearts Bar tonight. Firstly, this was to come into contact with other Beyonders through Kaspars so as to choose a suitable bodyguard. Secondly, he could find an opportunity to sell Meursault's Beyonder characteristic, gather some funds, and see if anyone was selling any powerful mystic items to enhance his strength. This was a plan that would never go out of date.

After confirming his plan, Klein pretended to leisurely read the newspaper. He waited until the sky turned dark before slowly getting up and making himself tomato oxtail soup.

After eating and drinking to his heart's content, he drew the bedroom curtains as usual and decided not to open them tonight.

Then, summoning himself and responding to himself, he turned into the unique spirit body, bringing back Azik's copper whistle, Meursault's Beyonder characteristic, the self-made charms, all sorts of materials, and the tarot cards to the real world, leaving behind only a few items, such as the bloodied contract.

After doing all of this and equipping the corresponding items, Klein's strength returned to its peak, and he was once again half an expert in mysticism.

He straightened his collar, took his hat and cane, and left 15 Minsk Street.

…

Iron Gate Street, inside Bravehearts Bar.

In exchange for a glass of beer, Klein found Kaspars in a card room, playing Fighting Evil while betting on a boxer outside. He was leading quite a pleasant life.

The familiar surroundings reminded Klein of the last time he had met Maric playing poker with more than ten living corpses. He was suddenly glad that he hadn't brought Azik's copper whistle with him.

If I carried the copper whistle that Mr. Azik had given me, I think that a dozen or so of Maric's zombies would mutiny on the spot and come to "entertain" me warmly… I wonder what kind of expression he would have… Klein stood by the door, nodding at Kaspars Kalinin to indicate his intentions.

Kaspars covered his cards and swore. He got up, walked to the door, and said in a low voice, "I'll take you to a place where the people, although they aren't as good as Maric, are pretty strong. As for whether or not you can make a deal, it has nothing to do with me. However, I have to warn you in advance, you are not to anger them, or you might not be able to see the sun tomorrow. Of course, it's not easy to see the sun in Backlund after September."

"Do I need to pay you?" Klein asked sincerely.

Kaspars nodded, pleased.

"Two pounds."

I can buy a revolver with that money at a weapons store… Although they set the price at more than three pounds, it can basically be haggled for around two pounds… Klein grumbled and gave Kaspars two one-pound notes.

Kaspars turned his head to his fellow players to inform them that he was leaving. Hobbling along, he led Klein towards the bar's kitchen, and from there, entered the back alley and circled around a darkened house.

He took out an iron mask that could only cover half a face, handed it to Klein, and chuckled.

"Just pretend that you bought this for two pounds."

I can buy a lot more with two pounds… Klein wore the iron mask and deliberately messed up his hair.

Seeing that he was ready, Kaspars knocked on the door rhythmically.

Seven or eight seconds later, a small wooden board on the door was suddenly pulled open, revealing a pair of brown eyes behind it.

After a long moment of scrutiny, Klein finally saw the door open behind him.

A man wearing an iron mask stood there and handed Klein a hooded robe. He said to Kaspars in a hoarse voice, "Next time, remember to tell me in advance. Otherwise, hmph!"

He closed the door, turned, and led Klein through the darkened living room into the activity room on the first floor.

There was a candle burning on the coffee table, and the room was dimly lit.

There were about ten people sitting on the sofas and chairs around the coffee table. They were all wearing hooded robes and wearing iron masks.

After putting on the long robe, Klein quietly found a chair in a corner and sat down. He heard a fat-faced man complain, "Recently, there has been a group of wild beasts in the sewers that have gnawed away a lot of the herbs I grew.

"They're very smart and didn't even touch the poisonous ones. I need someone to help me clean them up. You know, this isn't my specialty. I'm only good at concocting medicine and treating your illnesses."

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CHAPTER 240
TRYING YOUR LUCK?

Good at concocting medicine, treating illnesses, and growing quite a few medicinal herbs in the sewers… Is he an Apothecary? I wonder if he's a member of the Life School of Thought or a believer of Mother Earth? Of course, it's more likely for him to be unaffiliated… Klein listened thoughtfully but didn't speak out carelessly.

In the Loen Kingdom, due to the Church of the Lord of Storms rejecting the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, while the Church of the Evernight Goddess and the Church of the God of Combat were irreconcilable; as a result of this, among the foreign religions, only the Church of Mother Earth had obtained the right to preach, but under the tacit suppression from the three Churches. They only had a few churches with very few believers, to the point that they didn't even need to form a team of Beyonders. And even if they did, they wouldn't be recognized by the government and couldn't cooperate with the police department. They would be considered as vigilantes.

According to the confidential information of the Nighthawks, the Church of Mother Earth had two sequence paths in its control: Planter and Apothecary. However, the latter was apparently incomplete.

The suspected Apothecary didn't have his hood on. He revealed a black iron mask on his face, but it only covered the part above the bridge of his nose, making the quivering fat on his cheeks appear to stand out.

"I repeat, I need someone to clean up the newly appeared beast in the sewers. I only need the area around Backlund Bridge cleaned up. Payment will be with four bottles of my precious medicine; two of them can

effectively stop bleeding and stimulate the healing of wounds. Trust me, this is better than going to the clinic to do a suture operation, and it's effective for six months," the man suspected to be an Apothecary stated his requirements and corresponding conditions.

He suddenly let out a soft laugh and continued to describe the case, "The other two bottles can last one and a half months, and can allow a man to find the urges from back when he was seventeen or eighteen years old and become a Beyonder on the bed. Hehe, you know what I mean. Even if it exceeds the use-by date, it can still produce effects, but it will also spread throughout the body. The user will become abnormally violent and their strength, speed, and agility will greatly increase before exhaustion kicks in half an hour later.

Why does he look like those old military doctors who plaster their tiny advertisements everywhere… And shamelessly promoting the effects of his expired drugs… Klein couldn't help but silently lampoon.

Seeing the silent room after he said his piece, the suspected Apothecary could only grit his teeth and say, "I'll add 30 pounds on top of my 4 precious bottles of medicine!"

Finally, a man sitting somewhere along the periphery of the couches spoke up.

He surveyed the area and said in a deep voice, "I accept this commission. You should pay an advance with two bottles of medicine, one of each kind. Mr. Eye of Wisdom will bear witness."

"No problem," said an elder seated on a single sofa with a nod.

The lines on his cheeks were deep, his skin a little shriveled, and his voice had an ancient quality to it, so Klein judged him to be an elderly gentleman.

"Alright." The suspected Apothecary heaved a sigh of relief.

After the conclusion of this transaction, the gathering seemed to turn more lively. Soon, a woman with her face completely covered by a hood said, "I want to sell two weapons."

Weapons? Klein adjusted his posture and became more focused.

Since he was temporarily unable to advance, he could only increase his strength by using external items.

"One of them is an inscribed steel sword. It was smithed by the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun. It comes with purifying and evil warding effects. It's the nemesis of Water Ghosts, Wraiths, Zombies, and other undead creatures. It can still be used for another three years. Of course, it's sharpness is enough to kill." The woman's voice fluctuated in volume, a clear attempt to hide her characteristics. "500 pounds or the Sequence 8 potion, Barbarian, and it will be yours."

How expensive… For me, there's no reason I must have it… If I were to encounter an undead that I'm currently unable to deal with, blowing the whistle is the best solution… Even without Mr. Azik, the messenger alone should be able to intimidate many undead creatures… Klein shook his head and listened to the lady's introduction of the second weapon.

"Meat Cleaver, with exquisite mechanical structure. It can be transformed, making it easy to carry. This is a combat weapon, made by an outstanding craftsman. It's rarely seen, and will cost 25 pounds."

There sure is a huge difference in pricing between weapons with Beyonder effects and those without… Klein watched from the sidelines until the steel sword was bought by a sullen gentleman in another corner, and the Meat Cleaver became part of Mr. Eye of Wisdom's collection.

There were successes and failures in the few deals that followed. The only thing that tempted Klein was a "Fortune Accessory," a Beyonder item that could make a person's luck with fortune rise for three months. However, this wasn't his main goal, and the price wasn't that great.

Seeing that the atmosphere had turned silent once again, he slowly exhaled and said in a suppressed voice, "I want to sell something."

After attracting everyone's attention, he took out an iron cigarette case and pushed out the crimson Beyonder characteristic which resembled jelly.

Without needing to organizing his words, he introduced it with something he had already prepared ahead of time.

"This is something I obtained from a corpse. I'm not sure what use it has; it's just that I find it very magical. Maybe some of you know what this is?"

Klein deliberately didn't mention that this was a Beyonder characteristic, nor did he mention that the crimson "jelly" in his hand could replace the main ingredient of the Hunter potion.

This involved the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility, and he didn't want to benefit the members of this Beyonder gathering with this knowledge.

In addition to this, Klein had the intention of probing to see if anyone there knew the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility. Such a person would definitely be stronger than the rest, or perhaps someone with a powerful background, making them suitable as a bodyguard.

At the same time, he continued to disguise himself as an ordinary person who didn't know much about the Beyonder community. Although the members of the gathering couldn't see his appearance through the iron mask, Kaspars Kalinin knew what he looked like, and quite a few people in the room probably knew Kaspars.

Being "careful" and "prudent" were the two things Klein had emphasized to himself before leaving home today.

Gazes examined the crimson object in his hand, but Klein wasn't a Spectator and couldn't tell what they meant.

After more than ten seconds, no one spoke. The room was as quiet as a cemetery.

At this moment, the old gentleman sitting on the sofa, Mr. Eye of Wisdom, coughed and said, "I have a rough idea of what it is and what it does, but knowledge needs to be exchanged with something in return.

"I'll pay four hundred pounds; believe me, it's a perfectly fair price. Of course, you have the right to refuse."

The main ingredients of Sequence 9 potions are about 150 to 200 pounds. Two are needed, and they add up to about 400 pounds… The offer is very reasonable… This old gentleman with the code name Eye of Wisdom seems to recognize that this belongs to the Hunter Sequence… He had no need for divination, and he was able to recognize it immediately… Could it be the Sequence 7 of the Sequencers pathway, Appraiser?

Klein thought for a moment and said, "Deal. However, sir, you don't need to rush to pay. I still have another request."

"What request?" Eye of Wisdom asked in an old voice.

Klein pondered and said, "The thing is, I offended someone. Uh, according to your circle, he should be Sequence 6 or maybe, 5. I wish to hire a bodyguard."

"Sequence 6, maybe Sequence 5? Why don't you just die quietly? If we reached that level, why would we be attending such a small gathering?" the suspected Apothecary blurted out with a bit of a sneer in his astonishment.

Although the other members of the party didn't say anything, from the looks of it, no one planned on accepting the request. Their thoughts were similar to those of the suspected Apothecary.

Eye of Wisdom chuckled and said, "Maybe you don't know our circle well enough. People at Sequence 6 or Sequence 5 are very, very powerful and

terrifying people. Yes, there have been many cases of a lot of Sequence 8 and Sequence 9 Beyonders killing someone that strong, but those are events that are still very hard to replicate. I think no one here is willing to take such a huge risk to protect you, uh… If you're certain that the other party is only Sequence 6 and doesn't have any mystical items, there might be someone who will want to accept the challenge this mission entails."

"Well, I'm not sure…" Klein shrugged and said, "Then I'll have to try to save myself. What can I get for 400 pounds? Uh, the mystical item you were talking about?"

"Believe me, a mystical item worth 400 pounds certainly won't be able to deal with your enemy, and it will even bring you more danger. I suggest that you apologize to him. Sincerely apologize and perhaps 400 pounds will be enough to buy his understanding," Eye of Wisdom said sincerely.

Frankly, I've thought about it, but I don't think they'll accept it… Klein was about to answer when the man who had accepted the task of cleaning the sewer beast suddenly laughed.

"Maybe, you can try your luck.

"I have a mystical item here that I can sell you for 400 pounds.

"It can let you hear the voice of a great being. If you're lucky and can decipher some useful information, you'll become very powerful, and it will no longer be difficult for you to protect yourself. Well, if you're unlucky and end up deciphering a curse, or fail to decipher it, then you'll be hurt, or even end up dying.

"Do you want to take the gamble?"

Before he could finish his sentence, Eye of Wisdom growled, "Black Snake, don't mention that ominous item of yours!"

Black Snake laughed and said, "I'm not lying, I'm not violating the rules here either. I told him about the advantages and disadvantages and left him to make his own choice. Hmm, the probability of getting useful information is approximately 10%; do you want to take the gamble?"

The Russian roulette of the Beyonder world… Hearing the voice of a great being… Is this the Aurora Order's Listener? An item left behind after a Listener lost control? Klein looked at Black Snake, that he suspected to be a member of the Aurora Order, and made many connections.

Perhaps I can bet on it? No, I can't call it a bet, because I'll bring this item to the world above the gray fog before using it… I can already bring real objects there… This way, I can avoid most of the danger… However, this is only an item left behind by a Sequence 8 Beyonder. The corresponding benefit might not be that good… Four hundred pounds isn't cheap… As his thoughts raced through his mind, Klein nodded solemnly and said, "Deal."

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CHAPTER 241
LANGUAGE OF FOULNESS

There was only a single candle that illuminated the room. The atmosphere in the living room was so silent that it was as if everything had frozen.

A few seconds later, the suspected Apothecary finally muttered, "Why don't you leave an address? That way, I can get something out of your body."

He looks like he's cursing me, but he's actually persuading me otherwise… Klein pretended not to understand and said to Black Snake, "I don't have any chance of survival if I don't gamble. There'll be that sliver of hope if I gamble on it.

"I won't sit back and wait for death."

Hearing this, Eye of Wisdom, who was about to say something, shut his mouth because he couldn't offer any other hope.

"I really admire your character!" Black Snake laughed.

"I also admire you. In the past, I had quite a few friends who had such characters. Now, I visit their tombstones every year and place a bunch of flowers there," the suspected Apothecary mused in a mocking but actually persuasive manner.

He didn't care that Black Snake was a better fighter than he was. He said whatever he wanted to.

Mr. Apothecary must have suffered because of his temper… Klein was secretly grateful.

He handed the iron cigarette case containing the Hunter Beyonder characteristic to the attendant who brought it to Eye of Wisdom.

The old gentleman counted out 400 pounds in cash from the suitcase beside him and got the attendant to pass it on to Black Snake.

Black Snake casually took a glance and said, "I believe in Mr. Eye of Wisdom."

He took out a small wooden box, bent down, and placed it on the ground. He pushed the box so that the object slid to Klein without going through the attendant.

The moment Klein's fingers touched the surface of the box, he heard faint illusory sounds and immediately felt a strong sense of dizziness.

For him, this wasn't something he couldn't handle. It wasn't even comparable to the illusory voices of Justice and company when they pray to him.

After sitting up straight again, Klein carefully opened the wooden box and saw a "ear" inside!

The ears looked real, except that the skin was dark and there were a few green areas where it had rotted.

"How do I use it?" Klein asked.

Black Snake casually replied, "Grasping it without gloves is the same as using it. Heh, you'd better go home and try it when you're alone."

Klein didn't ask any further questions. He closed the box and put it into his pocket. He deliberately smiled bitterly and said, "This makes me dizzy."

After a short moment of silence, the suspected Apothecary suddenly shouted, "I want to buy Spring of the Elves marrow crystals, who has it?"

As his voice echoed in the air, no one answered.

The Apothecary smacked his lips and mumbled, "Seriously, there's no answer every time this is asked."

"Maybe you could book a cruise to Sonia Island," Eye of Wisdom quipped.

The Spring of the Elves was also known as the Sonia Golden Springs, and one could tell from its name where it came from. The Spring of the Elves was a commonly seen liquid and was an object with rich spirituality. However, the marrow crystals were considered Beyonder ingredients and not easily purchasable.

After that, there were a few failed transactions at the gathering. Eye of Wisdom clapped his hands and said, "Let's end it here today. According to the convention, we leave one by one, each separated by three minutes."

Leaving one by one… Each separated by three minutes… This is to prevent the Gathering members from being tailed and robbed? When Klein received the signal from Eye of Wisdom, he stood up and, guided by the attendant, left the activity room, and went to the door.

He took off his hooded robe and handed it back to the attendant before following the path in his memories back to the back door of the Bravehearts Bar. He then removed his iron mask and walked through the kitchen to see Kaspars standing outside the card room, over the barking of dogs and clamoring of people.

"I'm delighted that you could come back." The red-nosed elder heaved a sigh of relief, the nasty wounds on his face seemingly trembling.

Klein leaned over and said in a low voice, "Are there such gatherings in the future?"

"It seems like you didn't get what you wanted. Holy Lord of Storms, I don't think you should continue wasting your time." Kaspars scanned this

customer he felt worried for. "Maybe it'll take a few days. I don't know the details. Let's see if you can make it in time."

Klein nodded and asked, "Is Maric here?"

"You're still trying to convince him? No, it will only anger him!" Kaspars warned him in a deep voice. "He's in the card room behind you."

No, I'm not going to convince him. I'm trying to stay as far away from him as possible so that his zombies won't go into mutiny… Klein touched Azik's copper whistle in his pocket.

"I understand."

He left the Bravehearts Bar at once, went to the one-bedroom apartment in East Borough to relieve himself before returning to Minsk Street.

Inside the card room, Maric had gone all-in and confidently flipped open his cards.

He had three Kings and a pair of Nines, and the zombie opposite him had a pair of Sixes and an Eight.

Suddenly, the zombie took the initiative to reveal its hidden cards, a pair of Sixes!

This round, it won with four Sixes!

The pale Maric sat there blankly and immediately felt all the surrounding zombies coldly staring at him.

A few minutes later, he staggered out the card room on shaky feet and almost collapsed at the door while his usual entourage of subordinates inside the room fell to the ground.

"Don't let anyone in before dawn," Maric ordered in a hoarse voice as he looked at the stunned Kaspars.

He took out a white handkerchief and wiped the corner of his mouth. The handkerchief was quickly dyed with a dark blue tint with some redness.

After receiving Kaspars's acknowledgment, Maric found a chair to sit and asked for a barrel of Southville beer. He stared blankly as he drank.

…

At 15 Minsk Street, Klein followed his usual routine of washing up and returning to his room before he drew the curtains.

After waiting for over ten minutes and confirming that there were no specks of spirituality around, he started to summon himself. He responded to himself and brought the wooden box containing the black ear into the mysterious space above the gray fog.

The illusory crimson stars didn't twinkle at all as Klein sat at the seat of honor of the long ancient table and opened the wooden box.

This time, he didn't hear any murmurs or feel dizzy. The boundless gray fog seemed to isolate all external sounds.

Klein let out a sigh of relief. He was now much more confident with his impending attempt and much more confident about his own safety.

With a thought, he blocked his own hearing and performed a few experiments to confirm the effects.

That's right… Klein nodded in satisfaction, reached out, and grabbed the black ear with signs of rot.

He felt its coldness and slipperiness, but he didn't hear the voice of the great being that was described by Black Snake.

Completely isolated? This won't do… It's impossible to use it alone… Klein muttered to himself, puzzled as he thought of the methods he could use to stimulate an effect.

After a dozen or so seconds, he conjured a pen and paper, intending to emulate the process he used to spy on the Eternal Blazing Sun previously.

*That time, I looked directly at the Eternal Blazing Sun through the use of divine blood. This time, I'm only using the remains left behind by a Listener, so it definitely isn't that dangerous… *Klein wrote down a divination statement without any hesitation:

"The origin of this item."

He took a breath, held the black ear, and leaned back as he recited the divination statement.

After reciting it seven times, his eyes darkened as he entered a deep slumber.

In this blurry, shattered, and gray world, Klein saw a man struggling on the ground. He rolled, screamed, and his eyes bulged out. His body swelled like a balloon, and countless hairs on his body turned black and long.

Soon after, an extremely evil and foul voice rang in Klein's ears, waking him up instantly.

It was different from the ravings and howling that came from the mysterious space above the gray fog. This sound was more penetrating, more purposeful, and more active!

Klein covered his ears and isolated any fallout, but the same voice echoed in his head.

He saw his vessels and veins bulge out as if they had become thick squirming venomous snakes.

Bang!

His blood vessels burst, and his veins broke off from his body, spreading out into slippery tentacles filled with sinister patterns. The gray fog slightly swayed, making the giant's palace look like it was about to corrode.

Unlike the incident with the Eternal Blazing Sun, Klein still retained his sanity and didn't roll over on the ground. He gripped the handrail tightly and endured the pain.

After a few seconds, the slightly swaying gray fog regained its calm, and the evil voice that echoed in Klein's mind completely died down.

One "tentacle" after another fell to the ground, and his wounds began to rapidly heal.

Interacting with deities is truly a dangerous matter, regardless of the method… Thankfully, I didn't face the True Creator directly this time. If not, I'll have remnants of madness and signs of losing control and would affect my body in the real world… Klein weakly leaned back into his chair and silently mocked himself.

This process was within his expectations, and it didn't go out of his control.

The only thing that surprised him was that the True Creator appeared to be slightly stronger than the Eternal Blazing Sun…

Just as Klein's thoughts were about to wander off, he saw the black ear in his palm suddenly crumbled, turning into tiny specks of black light.

It has become a pure Beyonder characteristic? Amidst his confusion, he saw through the corner of his eyes that the sinister-patterned tentacles were still twitching on the ground. They were the aspects of madness and loss of control that had been stripped from his body.

These tentacles gradually turned transparent and were about to disappear.

A flash of brilliance came to Klein's mind. He scattered the tiny black light specks in his palm at those slippery tentacles.

An illusionary black gas rose up and turned into a sky that constantly streaked with lightning. The background was extremely dense and gloomy.

All of this quickly disappeared from Klein's eyes. On the surface of the iron-black charm on the ground were many symbols, magic labels, sinister patterns, and twisted path numbers.

Klein bent down and picked it up, with the feeling that what was sealed inside were howling maniacs.

With the help of his divination techniques, he was able to barely decipher the use of this charm from its revelation. It was to let the opponent hear a terrifying roar, infecting them with madness. As for the final result, it depended on the target's ability to resist such attacks. If the target was strong, then they might benefit from it, but the price was becoming a devout believer of the True Creator, and if he was weak, he would collapse on the spot, dying amidst tragic cries.

I'll call it Language of Foulness… Klein muttered and set an incantation to activate it.

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CHAPTER 242
BAKERLAND

Early Tuesday morning, Klein woke up naturally and prepared two slices of toast, a piece of butter, a serving of bacon, and a cup of coffee before leisurely reading a newspaper while having breakfast.

With the terrifying Language of Foulness charm, he was much more at ease. He was no longer as tense as he was before.

Klein finished flipping through the Backlund Bulletin, picked up the Tussock Times, and saw a news article on the second page.

"At two o'clock this morning, there was a fierce gunfight at Red Brick Alley in the East Borough. According to the police, it is suspected to be a clash between two gangs, one of which is the notorious Zmanger gang."

The Zmanger gang… Red Brick Alley in the East Borough… A thought occurred to Klein as he left the dining table and found the map of Backlund.

With just a glance, he noticed that Red Brick Alley wasn't far from Bacardi Street. Furthermore, Ian Wright had previously appeared at the telegraph office on Bacardi Street.

Was Red Brick Alley where Ian Wright was hiding? Was the violent conflict between the military's special department and the intelligence staff of the Intis Republic? I wonder what the result will be… Klein picked up the last of the bacon, put it in his mouth, and chewed it slowly.

He had "informed" both sides about the divination the previous morning and they had already locked onto Ian's location that very night, which

implied quite a high level of efficiency.

After taking a sip of coffee, Klein put down the newspaper and fell into deep thought.

Suddenly, he heard the tinkling of the doorbell.

"Who is it?" Klein wiped his mouth with a napkin and headed for the door, puzzled.

Could it be a new commission? For the past few days, I've been out and about because of the Intis Ambassador. I wonder how many jobs and potential clients I've lost… It's such a waste of my advertising money… If this goes on, my finances will be stretched to the limit… Klein suddenly thought of something and opened the door.

Standing outside were two ladies, one of them being Mrs. Sammer, who wore a dressing gown. She had intricate makeup on her face, making her look more beautiful than at home and nothing like she was in her thirties. The other lady wore a wide-brimmed hat with a black tartan veil, and a darker, more fluffy dress.

"Detective Moriarty, I have a friend who needs your help." Stelyn Sammer held onto her veiled hat, but there was no hint of a smile in her blue eyes.

"Please come in." Klein pointed to the living room, and while he was turning around, he took the opportunity to fasten the top button of his shirt and adjusted his black vest.

Stelyn nodded slightly and, without another word, led the black-veiled lady into the room.

She knew the place very well, and without Klein's guidance, easily found the sofa and took her seat.

Klein wanted to immediately start asking, but then thought about Stelyn Sammer's style of doing things, so he asked with a smile, "Coffee or tea?"

In his eyes, Mrs. Sammer was a lady who pursued a high quality of life and tried to showed her superiority all the time.

"There's no need." The other lady took off her hat.

She had good features, but the combination was disappointing. In addition, her cheekbones were too high, and she looked older than her actual age.

A little anger, a little sadness, a little hesitation, a little fear… Klein read the lady's emotions.

It wasn't that he suddenly possessed the abilities of a Spectator, but that the lady's actions were just too obvious.

"Yes, neither coffee nor tea can solve the problem." Stelyn imitated a position found in magazines, trying her best to appear classy. "This is Mrs. Mary Gale, a shareholder of Coim Company."

"What would you like to entrust me with, Mrs. Gale?" Klein sat down on a single-seater, leaning forward slightly and resting his arms on his thighs.

"Don't call me Mrs. Gale. Just call me Mary." Mary Gale pursed her lips. "I wish for you to tail my husband and confirm if he has a mistress. It's best if you can obtain material evidence."

As a result of the Church of the Evernight Goddess's active push for years, the Loen Kingdom was more radical in its marriage laws than the other countries, such as Feysac, Intis, and Lenburg. It stipulated that those who committed adultery had to pay a financial price for it, which meant that the adulterer would be at an absolute disadvantage during the division of property.

I've heard that at least four out of ten of the other private detectives are investigating extramarital affairs… I didn't expect that I would receive such a job too… Klein said thoughtfully, "Material evidence is not easy to obtain."

"I'll lend you the latest portable camera," Mary replied without any hesitation. "As long as you have the evidence, I will pay you ten pounds. If you only confirm that he has a mistress, you will only receive three pounds."

You mean the so-called portable camera that's about two-thirds the size of my head? 10 pounds, this isn't a low price… Mr. Klein has been focusing on entrepreneurship and knew about the latest cameras.

He hesitated for two seconds before saying, "Alright."

"But you have to provide me with detailed information about your husband and his regular activities."

"…No problem!" Mary paused for a second before gathering all her strength to say it.

"Thank you for your help. I hope you won't tell anyone else about this," Stelyn reminded him.

Hearing this, Klein immediately sighed, "I'm a person who upholds confidentiality, and I often get into trouble for that."

…

In the lobby of Count Wolf's house, men and women were dancing amid violin tunes.

Audrey was carrying a glass of pale gold champagne when she "accidentally" bumped into the Intis Republic ambassador to Loen, Bakerland Jean Madan.

"You're the most beautiful young lady I've ever met." Bakerland, with his thin face and slight stubble, pecked Audrey's white-gauzed glove with a kiss according to propriety customs. His eyes looked passionate and bold.

Audrey rolled her eyes and said with a chuckle, "Is this the way people from Intis talk?"

"Yes, we are never stingy with praise for beautiful things." Bakerland chuckled. "If it wasn't for the style of the Loen Kingdom, I might have called you my angel."

Old pervert… Audrey maintained her graceful smile and said, "The people of Loen and Intis are indeed different."

"Heh, that makes me think of a joke. Please allow me to be presumptuous." Bakerland squinted his eyes and said, "After a good time with a beautiful girl, most Loen men would say, 'Oh, dear, I'd like a cigarette', but most Intis men would say…"

He deliberately paused, and Audrey tilted her head, trying her best to keep her nausea in check while looking puzzled.

"What would they say?"

"Most of the Intis men would say, 'Oh, baby, I have to return now and can't be discovered by my wife.'" Bakerland raised his glass and laughed.

"…People who can laugh at themselves always have an additional charm to them." Audrey smiled politely.

Her beautiful, clear, dark green eyes suddenly turned to look behind Ambassador Bakerland.

"I'm sorry, a friend is looking for me."

"It's a pleasure talking to you." Bakerland bowed and moved aside.

Audrey moved forward gracefully and didn't look back again.

Just as she was considering who she should find as the object of her excuse, a young gentleman approached her and, lowering his voice, warned her, "Audrey, don't be fooled by that Ambassador Bakerland, he's a dirty old man! I don't know how many women he's tricked into bed.

Bakerland is lustful? This is in line with my observations… This is a weakness… Audrey smiled without hiding her disgust.

"Kance, do you have a misconception about me? Goddess, how could I be bewitched by that Ambassador Bakerland? His cologne makes me want to vomit; his words are so foul, and his taste is like a male peacock."

Kance was Viscount Leerhsen's youngest son, and their family was on fairly good terms with the Hall family.

According to Audrey, Kance had entered MI9 after graduating from Tingen University and had become quite enigmatic.

Her original plan had been to have a chat with Ambassador Backlund, and observe him up close before using the pretext of exasperation to get more information from Kance and his other friends from the intelligence community to learn more about him. To her surprise, she didn't need to seek out Kance Leerhsen since he came over and started the corresponding conversation on his own accord.

"Your feelings are correct." Kance gave a sincere smile. He surveyed his surroundings and whispered, "Besides, Bakerland is a very dangerous fellow."

"How dangerous?" Audrey asked curiously.

"Have you heard of Beyonders? I know that you've always been interested in such matters," Kance said with some deliberation.

Audrey gently nodded.

"I know quite a bit, most of it being told to me by Glaint."

Kance took a glance at Bakerland, who was chatting with an affluent lady, and said with a serious expression, "He's Intis's intelligence head in our Kingdom. He's done numerous atrocities, but we haven't been able to gather any evidence of his crimes. He's a Sequence 6, a Conspiracist."

He didn't go into details with an outsider like Audrey, nor did he mention that Conspiracist was part of the Hunter pathway.

However, Audrey was already aware of this. She feigned naivety and sighed.

"He's really amazing!"

"He has an assistant in the shadows, one that has perhaps reached Sequence 5. In addition to that, all of the Intis intelligence agents in the Kingdom are under his management. Many of them are Beyonders. Unfortunately, we only know a few of them…" Kance added in passing. "Don't be too happy if Bakerland praises you either. It's not what he truly thinks. He just wants to use this opportunity to gather more information."

I don't like what you're saying… Audrey looked up at the ornate chandelier and thought for a few seconds.

"Is Bakerland very smart? You haven't managed to get any incriminating evidence…"

"He truly is good at scheming, but he also has a lot of problems. He likes to chase after women and loves the feeling of romance. He takes risks and is quite radical. If it wasn't for his identity as an ambassador preventing us from taking action easily, he would've been captured long ago." Kance stroked his chin and said, "However, he'll be replaced very soon. Very soon."

"Why?" Audrey asked in surprise.

"My dear beautiful lady, this isn't something you should know." Kance adhered to the principle of confidentiality.

When the ball was almost over, Audrey, who had gathered quite a bit of information, found Viscount Glaint and asked him to help her contact Xio and Fors.

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CHAPTER 243
CATCHING THE ADULTEROUS ACT

Wednesday morning, across from the Coim Company, in the Cherwood Borough.

Klein was sitting on a wooden bench outside the Gardeley department store, clutching a paper bag containing the most famous Cyndi Desi pie in the area with one hand, and holding a cup of iced tea in the other.

Beside him, a tramp was curled up on the other side of the bench, sleeping. Ten minutes later, the mall's security guard woke him up and shooed him away.

Klein wore gold-rimmed spectacles which didn't provide for any vision correction and a silk half top hat. He didn't look much different from most of the gentlemen around him.

He idly looked across the street at the Coim Company, lifted his right hand, and took a large bite of the Cyndi Desi pie. He felt the rich aroma gush out and fill his oral cavity.

The reason why this pie from Desi Bay stood out amongst the southern pies was that it used a lot of oil and fat, but the meat was chopped into very tiny bits. With the fat and lean meat mixed together, it didn't feel too heavy.

The rich, meaty juice seeped into the outer crust, neutralizing the dryness and made up for its shortcomings. The wheat fragrance was clearly brought

out, and the small pieces of crushed apples were used to stimulate appetite with a slightly sour and sweet taste while neutralizing the oily taste.

It's okay… Although the weather isn't good and the pollution is terrible, Backlund is far superior to Tingen in many other aspects. Foods of all styles can be found everywhere. There are all kinds of operas and plays available. They can be enjoyed as long as one isn't afraid to spend money… Although I might not necessarily eat or partake in such entertainment, I have these options at the very least. This is the advantage of a big city… Klein raised his sweet iced tea and took a sip.

He never took his eyes off the Coim Company's entrance. For that ten pounds, he had been sitting there since eight in the morning. Even his breakfast was bought on the way there.

Of course, for most private detectives, a commission of ten pounds was an absolutely enviable business, equivalent to about three weeks' salary for a member of the middle class!

According to the information provided by Mary Gale, her husband was currently the first manager of Coim Company and was Luke Sammer's superior; however, their shares in the Coim Company came from Mary's father, and Mary had inherited it.

One of the immediate reasons she suspected her husband of having a mistress was that an employee in the company had divulged to her that Doragu Gale would leave the office on Wednesday and Friday mornings alone and only return in the afternoon. In addition, he would leave work early for two days a week, and Mary had never seen her husband return home before seven.

After breakfast, Klein waited another hour plus before seeing his target walk out of Coim.

He was wearing a black top hat, a double-breasted tweed coat, and a standard bow tie. He was slightly fat, with yellowish temples, slightly

brownish eyes, and a slightly long face.

Doragu Gale… He silently recited his target's name, stood up, picked up his cane and his heavy portable camera, and crossed the road.

Instead of getting his carriage driver to pick him up, he stood by the side of the road and looked around for a rental carriage.

Klein took the opportunity to cross the road and arrive beside him. Pretending to be careless, he bumped into his target.

"Sorry, I'm quite lost." Klein bowed his head in apology.

Doragu frowned, but remained silent, waving his hand to indicate that it didn't matter.

Klein bent down, bowed, and walked to the end of the street.

He didn't run into Doragu in order to steal his belongings and use the dowsing method to easily track him. That would've been easily noticeable.

Instead, Klein had only done one thing when he collided with Doragu. With the help of his agility as a Clown, he had secretly slipped a spare button of his into one of the pockets of Doragu's double-breasted coat.

Going around a corner, he stopped and looked back just in time to see Doragu board a rental carriage.

Klein was in no hurry to tail him. He waited patiently for a few minutes before slowly getting into another horse carriage and said to the carriage driver, "Just go according to my instructions. Head to the end of the street first."

"Alright." The driver didn't ask why.

Inside the carriage, Klein leaned his cane and began performing a divination.

However, his divination statement wasn't directed at Doragu Gale; instead, it became "the whereabouts of the spare button of my clothes!"

The Dowsing Rod Seeking was originally the most practical technique to find objects. Only Seers were able to use it to seek people. Now, Klein was using it in its original form.

The easiest and most convenient items to find were those that belonged to himself!

Along the way, Klein kept getting the carriage driver to change directions until they finally arrived at a street house in the Hillston Borough. When they first circled it, Klein noticed that there were gardens and lawns behind the house, which was different from the other houses.

His dowsing method told him that Doragu Gale was inside that house.

After paying the two-soli fare, Klein walked to the door with marble statues outside. He saw two men in black and white plaid uniforms that resembled the police uniform.

"I don't know you. Where's your proof of membership?" One of them, a brown-skinned man of Southern Continent blood, stopped Klein.

"Proof of membership?" Klein hid his heavy camera behind him and asked with a slight frown.

The brown-skinned man immediately turned stern.

"This is the Quelaag Club. Only our members and up to one of their guests can enter."

Klein tersely acknowledged.

"Then how can I join your club?"

"You can only join after receiving a recommendation from two members," The brown-skinned man didn't brutally chase him away, but patiently answered the question.

He couldn't guarantee that Klein would end up joining the club eventually.

"Alright." Klein pursed his lips and decided to put Plan B into motion.

He found a hotel near the Quelaag Club and got a short-stay room for four hours.

Then, he locked the door behind him, drew the curtains, and entered the space above the gray fog. He conjured a yellowish-brown goatskin and a fountain pen in front of him.

Taking a deep breath, Klein wrote the exact same divination sentence as before: "The whereabouts of the spare button of my clothes."

This time, he didn't use the dowsing method, but a dream divination!

The reason why he didn't do it in the real world was because Klein felt that the Quelaag Club seemed to be quite a high-end club, and he suspected that there might be some powerful Beyonders inside. In order to not waste time, he decided to get it done once and for all.

In the gray dreamy world, Klein was the first to see Doragu's black coat, which was hung on a coat rack. On the carpet in front of it was a round table.

The scene zoomed out, and the sight of a romping man and woman entered Klein's eye. The man was Doragu Gale, the woman had shimmering blond hair who looked rather young. She was in her early twenties at most.

The pained expression with her knitted brows does look rather coquettish… Why am I always seeing scenes such as this… Klein covered his eyes and woke up.

*The fact that Doragu has a mistress is confirmed… How do I get material evidence… By responding to my prayers? But this is limited to what I can obtain with my own body. I can only do it through sketching and not through the camera… I can't possibly draw a picture with my bare hands, can I? It looks like today won't do. I'll tail that girl and find out her address and name later. I refuse to believe that they'll be inside the Quelaag Club every time they meet… *Detective Klein quickly came up with his next course of action.

Just as he was about to leave the mysterious space above the gray fog, he suddenly thought of something.

He decided to take the opportunity to divine if the iron-black threadworm which had infiltrated his room was under the control of a Beyonder of the Seer pathway.

He didn't do so before because he felt that the relevant information was too scarce, and it was difficult to create something out of nothing which would result in a failed divination. It would've been the same if he was above the gray fog. Furthermore, he had various matters to divine the few times he came above the gray fog previously, and he didn't have the capacity to bother with such a question. Now that he was free, he decided that it wouldn't hurt to do the divination.

As for the question of whether it was risky to contact Azik, he had already long divined it. The answer was that it was risky, and not something trivial, so he could only use it as his last resort.

After writing the corresponding divination statement, Klein removed the silver chain from his sleeve and allowed the topaz pendant to hang over the paper.

"The iron-black threadworm that sneaked into my room was controlled by a Beyonder from the Seer pathway."

…

After repeating it seven times, Klein opened his eyes and saw that the spirit pendulum was spinning clockwise, with great amplitude and frequency.

Positive… The answer is positive!

Shouldn't it have failed? Klein didn't expect to obtain such an answer. According to his Seer instincts, such a divination was likely to fail.

Why? He frowned and thought for a while before deciding to switch to a different method of divination and target.

He wanted to directly divine the controller using dream divination!

This time, Klein saw nothing in his dream, and couldn't get the corresponding revelation about the Seer pathway Beyonder.

"That's more like it…" he muttered and thought back to the prior divination and fell into deep thought.

They should've been a lack of conditions and result in a failed divination just like the one that followed… Could it be that this mysterious space had filled in the necessary conditions? Does it contain something of the Seer pathway? Klein suddenly had a flash of inspiration. He had a bold idea!

Perhaps, the mysterious space above the gray fog had something to do with the path of the Seer pathway!

Hmm… Klein lightly rapped the edge of the ancient table. Despite thinking about it, he couldn't find any other evidence. He could only temporarily put this matter on hold and prepare for his return to the real world.

Regardless, I've confirmed at least one thing. The Mid-Sequence Beyonder beside the Ambassador is from the Seer pathway and whether he's a member of the Seer doesn't matter… This might be my chance of obtaining the Sequence 7 and even the Sequence 6 potion formula! Klein extended his spirituality and wrapped it around him before plunging into the gray fog.

…

Meanwhile, in Viscount Glaint's study.

Audrey let the master of the study guard the door while she looked at Xio and Fors. After a few seconds of silence, she said, "I need your help with a mission."

"What mission?" Xio's eyes lit up as if she could smell the ink on the bills.

Audrey gave her a polite smile.

"Assassinate the Intis ambassador to the Loen Kingdom, Bakerland Jean Madan."

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CHAPTER 244
APPOINTEE

"What?" Fors touched her earlobes, wondering if she had heard wrongly.

The beautiful, naive, curious, and scatter-brained Miss Audrey actually assigned an assassination mission!?

Furthermore, the target is the ambassador of Intis, a powerful country in the Northern Continent!

Xio was slow on the uptake as she hesitantly said, "Our strength i-isn't enough to complete this mission."

The first thing she considered was the difficulty of the mission!

Audrey ignored her question and allowed her to imagine the reason. She said, with faint dimples showing, "I'm not asking you to take the job. I just wish for you to find a Beyonder with the strength to complete it. For example, Mr. A, I'll pay you 4000 gold pounds for this. Of course, this is only my initial offer. The details are negotiable.

"If it eventually succeeds, I'll pay you 500 pounds. Even if the mission ends up failing, you will receive 200 pounds due to the risk you have taken."

Her uninvested annuity and the rest of the bounty was around 13,000 pounds. However, any large utilization of it would certainly attract the attention of Count Hall, and even the Varvat Bank would investigate. She had calculated that 5000 pounds was the tipping point, and it was best not to exceed it.

4000 gold pounds… Xio heard her own heavy breathing, but she quickly became depressed, knowing full well that she wouldn't be able to complete the mission herself.

Just 500 pounds to seek out other Beyonders in our names while maintaining it a secret… Miss Audrey is the most generous and beautiful lady I've ever seen! Xio quickly returned to reality.

While feeling enticed, Fors's mind was filled with questions.

Why would Miss Audrey delegate such a mission?

Is there some internal strife among nobles?

Is this the precursor to inciting a war?

Is Count Hall representing some important figure in a bid to make the situation turn chaotic?

…

The duo quickly contacted Mr. A using a previously agreed-upon channel. At three o'clock in the afternoon, when the rare sunlight shined through the fog and lit up the whole of Backlund, they arrived at the house where they had previously participated in gatherings. There, they saw Mr. A sitting with his legs up and his hood over his head, but he gave off a condescending air.

"You said that you have something important to talk to me about?" Mr. A's eyes move back and forth between the two ladies.

I heard that some female Beyonders would use their bodies to trade for potion ingredients with Mr. A… He's really a disgusting pervert… Fors curled her lips and said, "There's a large transaction; I wonder if you're interested in it?"

Mr. A scanned Xio's face and chuckled.

"Tell me. Let's see what this large transaction is."

Holding back the urge to draw her triangular blade, Xio answered with the tone of a tribunal, "Assassinate the Intis ambassador to the Loen Kingdom, Bakerland Jean Madan."

Mr. A fell silent, but since his expression was obscured by the shadow of his hood, Xio and Fors couldn't guess what he was thinking.

After a while, he slowly leaned back and said with a deep voice, "So, what's the reward?"

"4000 pounds. In addition, we will provide the relevant information such as Ambassador Bakerland is a Sequence 6 Conspiracist of the Hunter pathway, or that his weakness is lust." Xio tried her best to make Mr. A believe that there was hope in completing the mission.

Mr. A chuckled and said, "I can accept this mission, but the reward must be raised."

"The first choice—the potion formulas to Unshadowed, Cataclysmic Interrer, Prophet, or Manipulator. Of course, their price is higher than this mission. There's no need for the complete formula. A partial formula will suffice.

"The second choice—10,000 gold pounds. Heh, this is the bounty of Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos. Bakerland's strength definitely isn't as strong as he is, but he has powerful aides. Besides, believe me, he definitely has mystical objects on him."

A reasonable price, but that's also an exaggerated price… Xio and Fors looked at each other and said, "We shall return and discuss it. At this time tomorrow, we'll give you our answer."

"Sure." Mr. A made a gesture of farewell.

After being led out by an attendant, Fors murmured in puzzlement, "Those are High-Sequence Beyonder formulas?"

"Frankly speaking, I find it strange. I thought Mr. A would only want formulas or potion ingredients. Money shouldn't be a necessity for him."

Xio turned to look at her friend.

"Fors, you really are a naive clinical doctor and author. You must know that Mr. A has many subordinates. They need a house to sleep in, stomachs to fill, clothes to buy, and the need to vent their desires. All of this has to be bought using money. Besides, to some nobles who have declined, what wouldn't they sell if there are gold pounds to be made?

"Without his men, Mr. A would be just as scary, but he will be rather lacking in intelligence.

"That's what all the small gangs in the East Borough know."

Fors frowned and said, "Xio, you're not that stupid after all…"

In the evening, the two of them met the familiar large golden retriever at a predetermined location and passed Mr. A's reply to Audrey.

When Audrey finished reading the note, not only did she not feel stumped, she even let out a long sigh of relief.

It was simply wonderful for her that she could finish the ambassador with just 10,000 gold pounds!

For the time being, I can only use 5000 pounds. I'll still have to pay Xio and Fors 500 pounds… Well, first of all, I'll borrow 6000 pounds, no—8000 pounds. I can't expose any problems with my daily expenses. Then, I'll pay him back over four to five months, with interest of 1000 pounds… Before the new year, I will be quite poor, having only 1000 pounds to use a month…

Audrey quickly made her decision. Then she burned the original slip of paper and wrote on a new piece of paper.

"The second option. An advance of 2000 pounds and the remaining 8000 pounds will be paid after the mission is completed."

…

At 15 Minsk Street, Klein saw Mary Gale again at tea time.

He had initiated the meeting through Mrs. Stelyn Sammer.

"Madam Mary, I found out that your husband went to the Quelaag Club while tailing him. However, I wasn't able to enter because I'm not a member of the club. Even so, according to my observations, about half an hour after your husband left, only one young lady came out. Her name is Erica Taylor, who lives at 126 New Year's Street, Hillston Borough. She used to work at Coim for a period of time and is currently unemployed. I took a picture of her leaving the Quelaag Club."

"She's unemployed; yet, she can live in Hillston Borough…" Stelyn sneered.

Mary wore a gloomy expression as she remained silent for a few seconds.

"You have to obtain material evidence of them being intimate. Oh… The Quelaag Club, right? I'll get two members to nominate you as a member, but you must fill in your particulars as 'famous detective.' I can't get people to bring you in because it might not mesh well with the schedules of others."

"Alright." Klein hesitated, but still asked, "Who will pay the club fees?"

"I will be responsible for the initial fees. This is in return for your efficiency. If you wish to remain in the club, you will have to pay the

annual fee of about 15 pounds yourself." There seemed to be a fire burning in Mary's eyes.

The fee is fifteen pounds a year, and the initiation fee is at least fifty pounds… A high-end club… Madam Mary, you sure are generous! Klein immediately nodded.

"I will provide you with the evidence as soon as possible."

…

After dinner, Klein went out again and continued to the Bravehearts Bar in the Backlund Bridge area.

There were two reasons for this. First, he wanted to show his helplessness in front of the military's special department and the police who were observing him in secret. He wanted to appear as though he was trying every method to save himself. Second, he also wanted to deceive the Mid-Sequence Beyonder from the Seer pathway under the Ambassador's command.

In matters involving the gray fog, Klein believed that the gentleman or lady would never be able to succeed in a divination, including his own resurrection and past events, as well as how he had successfully created the Language of Foulness charm through the help of the True Creator.

This is definitely a powerful item that can affect my opponent. Klein had to maintain his act of feeling unsafe and his act of madly grasping at all kinds of straw to mislead his opponent in order to increase his chances of victory.

Under the dark night, Klein entered the bar.

Before he could get a beer, he saw Kaspars, the old man with the brandy nose, standing in front of the rat-baiting ring with his arms crossed.

"Perfect timing. Maric is looking for you." Kaspars spotted Klein and limped over.

"Maric is looking for me?" Klein asked in shock.

Instinctively, he touched the Azik's copper whistle in his pocket and considered what excuse he could use to politely decline the meeting.

Or could it be that wrapping the copper whistle with one's spirituality wouldn't cause any zombie-like phenomenon? It wasn't like Mr. Azik hadn't been to the cemetery before, nor had any corpses attacked him… Klein tensed up.

Before he could come up with an excuse, he saw Maric, his face pale and his eyes filled with malice, walking over. He wasn't surrounded by any zombies.

*Where are his zombies? *Klein thought with a mixture of puzzlement and relief.

Maric pointed to the card room and walked over there first. Klein looked into the distance and followed him since there were no zombies.

"What's the matter?" Klein took the initiative to ask.

Maric, in a black vest and white shirt, sat on the card table and stared into Klein's eyes.

"Does that job of yours still stand?"

"Huh?" Klein wasn't able to react in time.

"I have a friend who is short on money and is willing to accept this commission. She's stronger than me and should be able to protect you. However, she can only protect you for three days. The price is 1000 pounds," Maric said in a low, slurred voice.

Why is a Beyonder willing to accept the commission only after I acquired the Language of Foulness… However, this is good as well. This will be able to confuse the ambassador's Beyonder. After he painstakingly defeats Maric's friend, my chances of success will become extremely high… The only problem is determining if Maric's friend is trustworthy… Hmm, I'll go above the gray fog to divine it… Klein pondered for a moment and said, "Give me time to consider it and save up the necessary funds. It's not a small sum.

"Also, it's best if the person protecting me is hidden. It must be confidential. As for the three days of protection, that is up to me. It's definitely within these two weeks."

Of course, the Seer would definitely be aware of it… Klein silently added.

As for money, he had already considered it from the beginning. If selling Meursault's Beyonder characteristic wasn't enough, he would ask Miss Justice for money. After all, he had made the preparations. Roselle's diary still had a lot of knowledge that could be sold. Of course, if the price was simply unacceptable, he could forgo it.

Now, although Meursault's Beyonder characteristic had become the Language of Foulness charm, I still have Miss Justice! She still owes me the money needed for Sequence 8 Light Suppliant as well as the intelligence regarding the Secret Order. Combining those together, 1000 pounds would be enough!

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CHAPTER 245
CONFIRMATION

Back home at 15 Minsk Street, Klein was in no hurry to head above the gray fog to perform a divination. Instead, he acted as though nothing had happened.

In the process, he heard an illusory prayer and vaguely recognized it as a woman's voice.

After experiencing the ravaging murmurs of the True Creator, my ability in this aspect has apparently improved a little… Klein turned the newspaper while engrossed in thought and settled himself on the reclining chair in a motionless half-slumped state.

He waited until the clock nearly struck ten, before putting down what he was doing and went to the bathroom on the second floor to clean himself up.

Entering the bedroom and pulling the curtains shut, Klein went above the gray fog. He saw that the crimson star symbolizing Justice was constantly expanding and contracting, and it was also echoing with prayers.

Klein spread out his spirituality and made contact. Dressed in a white silk nightgown, Miss Justice appeared in front of him.

Her figure was still blurry, as if she was in bed.

After reciting his honorable name, Audrey cut to the chase.

"Ambassador Bakerland is a Sequence 6 Conspiracist of the Hunter pathway. He's suspected to have a Sequence 5 assistant…

"After I obtained detailed information, I got someone to inquire Mr. A. He has agreed to accept the assassination mission, but the conditions are 10,000 gold pounds or any of the potion formulas of Unshadowed, Cataclysmic Interrer, Prophet, and Manipulator. They do not need to be complete. A portion of the formula would suffice.

"I chose the former and paid an advance of 2000 pounds. Honorable Mr. Fool, was my decision correct?"

*10,000 gold pounds… *The corner of Klein's lips twitched as he forced himself to focus on the matter.

The Sequence 5 assistant should be that Seer pathway infiltrator?

*The first thing that should be done is to overestimate the enemy… *

Would Mr. A have the ability to do it? Would he neglect the job after taking the money…

Cataclysmic Interrer, Prophet, Manipulator, and Unshadowed are likely Sequence 4's. That is the threshold of a High-Sequence Beyonder…

It is very likely that Mr. A is one of the 22 Oracles of the Aurora Order. To be stationed in the City of Cities, Backlund, means that he's second only to the five Saints of the Aurora Order's upper echelons. He must be the cream of the crop among the Oracles…

The Aurora Order wields the Secrets Suppliant pathway which is the direct route to the True Creator. As an Oracle, he has a high probability of being a Beyonder of this Sequence chain. Based on Backlund's position, it can be inferred that he's at Sequencers 5, Shepherd. Of course, he could also be a Rose Bishop that's one Sequence lower, but that would mean that he's more outstanding in other aspects, such as his intelligence…

I have to remind Miss Justice that she shouldn't have too many interactions with Mr. A. The Beyonders of the Secrets Suppliant Sequence are either already lunatics exhibiting abnormalities or lunatics who have hidden their insanity well, almost without exception… Sequence 8 Listeners in this Sequence pathway often hear the voice of the True Creator…

Yes, only a lunatic would be bold enough to accept the mission of assassinating an Intis ambassador and have the courage to complete it…

I have here a portion of the Unshadowed potion formula, as well as the corresponding ritual needed for the advancement. This can save Miss Justice 10,000 gold pounds…

Why would Mr. A only need the formulas of Unshadowed, Cataclysmic Interrer, Prophet, and Manipulator? Are these paths that can be swapped at High Sequences of the Secrets Suppliant pathway? That's a bit too much. That makes it five in total…

Unshadowed is from the Eternal Blazing Sun. Cataclysmic Interrer sounds like it's from the Lord of Storms or maybe the Evernight Goddess… I previously determined that the Eternal Blazing Sun, Lord of Storms, and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom have pathways that are relatively similar; therefore, They view each other with animosity. From the looks of it, Cataclysmic Interrer belongs to the Lord of Storms and is Sequence 4 of the Sailor Sequence. Prophet is likely from the God of Knowledge and Wisdom…

Then which pathway does Manipulator belong to?

It'll be interesting if they can all be exchanged with the Sequence corresponding to the True Creator…

Yes… I cannot give the Unshadowed formula to Mr. A. Not even a portion. The Aurora Order members are all lunatics who are always looking for opportunities to take revenge on the world to the detriment of public safety. Items of strategic importance must not be traded with them… This isn't just

a question of the bottom line, it also involves my own safety. Once the time is ripe, those lunatics from the Aurora Order might very well sacrifice the entire city…

*Let Miss Justice spend the 10,000 pounds then. Part of it includes the payment she would like to give to my adorer. The rest can be made up to her with the knowledge I already know… *Klein reached out and pinched his cheek.

He didn't reply to Justice immediately. Instead, he conjured a pen and paper, ready to make a divination.

Kline had no idea who Maric's friend was. He could only tell from the pronoun "she" that the person was a woman. Failure was inevitable if he wanted to directly divine the reliability of the person in question.

However, Klein could make an indirect divination regarding his own safety, which would have a much higher success rate.

As for whether he would suffer an interference or how accurate the outcome would be, he wasn't worried at all thanks to the gray fog's shielding.

After more than ten seconds of deliberation, Klein wrote: "It's risky for me to hire Maric's friend to be my bodyguard for three days."

Putting the pen away, he removed his spirit pendulum, focused his mind, and quickly performed the divination.

When he opened his eyes, he saw that the topaz pendant was rotating clockwise. However, the amplitude was very small and its speed was very slow.

There's a certain risk, but it's quite low… Reliable… Klein nodded slightly and changed to divine about Mr. A.

Similarly, he had no direct contact with Mr. A, and all he knew was based on descriptions and inference. It was difficult to find out whether or not he was capable enough, or willing to keep his promise. All he could do was make an indirect divination.

As an excellent "Seer," Klein quickly determined the direction, and that was to divine Ambassador Bakerland!

This ambassador had relatively more connections with him, and the information he had about him was even more detailed. Klein knew very well what the other party was involved in, and as a divination target, there were no problems.

After some thought, Klein wrote: "Bakerland Jean Madan will have his life threatened by Mr. A."

To prevent it from failing, he tried his best to make the words vague in this low-confidence divination and didn't require a definite answer.

This time, Klein saw that the spirit pendulum was still rotating clockwise, but it had become faster and the amplitude had increased.

It means that Mr. A will attempt to complete the mission, and that there's a good chance of success… Klein slowly exhaled and began to respond to Miss Justice's prayer.

"Sure.

"There's no problems with your decision.

"You absolutely must not show yourself when entrusting this mission.

"My adorer wishes for 1000 pounds for his activities. It will be done in the same way as before, and it would be best if it can be completed by tomorrow.

"This will be payment for the Light Suppliant formula. You do not need to seek out news regarding the Secret Order any further. However, if you obtain any relevant information, I will do a trade with you."

After learning that the infiltrator was a Beyonder in the Seer pathway, Klein's need for information about the Secret Order became less urgent.

He had originally wanted to ask for more than 1000 pounds, but in consideration of how Miss Justice had to pay 10,000 pounds to assassinate the ambassador, it was likely that her finances would be stretched to the limit; therefore, he only asked for the minimum.

After doing all of this, Klein didn't linger and immediately returned to the real world.

…

Audrey was holding a music score and humming a melody. The red moon was faintly discernible outside the window.

Suddenly, a thick gray fog appeared in front of her. A figure seated on an ancient chair looked down at her and spoke in a low voice.

Audrey let out a breath of relief after hearing Mr. Fool's response. She was no longer as nervous as she was.

1000 pounds… My debt to Mr. Fool is close to being paid off… I feel so much more relaxed suddenly… Audrey rested the music score against her chest and thought with her dimples showing.

Although she only had 1000 pounds to spend for quite a considerable period of time in the coming days, being put in a tight financial situation, all she needed to do was grit her teeth, and squeezing out a thousand pounds wouldn't be a problem.

I'll borrow more from Glaint and drag it out with more installments… Audrey had quite a good education in finances; after all, her father was a powerful banker behind the scenes.

…

At noon on Thursday, Klein heard another illusory prayer. He then confirmed that Miss Justice had deposited the money into his anonymous account.

The bank reconciliation and liquidation done in Backlund could be completed on the same day, meaning that from Friday, Klein would be able to withdraw the cash from any Backlund Bank branch in the city.

After lunch, Klein once again saw Mary Gale. She led him outside the Quelaag Club, where the two members were waiting.

One was a well-known surgeon, Aaron Ceres, and the other was the aristocratic equestrian teacher, Talim Dumont.

After greeting each other, the lanky and somewhat aloof doctor wearing gold-rimmed glasses entered the club first, leaving the equestrian teacher, Talim, who had short brown curly hair to converse with Klein amidst smiles.

"If it wasn't for Mary mentioning you, I wouldn't have known that Backlund has had an additional outstanding detective join its ranks. If there's anything I need to do in the future, I'll look for you."

"Then, let me thank you in advance." Klein smiled in response.

According to Mary's introduction on the carriage, he learned that Talim was originally of noble blood. His grandfather had a noble title of viscount, but it was a pity that his grandfather had squandered all his wealth. His father had nearly ten brothers and more than six sisters, and as nobles whose titles were determined by the amount of land they possessed, once the amount of

land went beneath a particular standard, the hereditary nobility title would be reduced. However, that also depended on the king's mood.

Talim was unlike the other children of nobility who could obtain a considerable sum of money when they reached adulthood. And due to his grandfather's reputation, he had no means of entering the government as an employee, or to be a butler of another noble family. Therefore, he could only play to his advantages and became a equestrian teacher for many nobles. His income was quite sizable, with about four hundred pounds a year.

"Sigh, divorce really leads to poverty." It was unknown if Talim was hinting at Mary Gale's situation or if he was reminded of his grandfather who seemed to be more of Intis ancestry.

Unable to engage in the conversation, Klein followed him into the Quelaag Club, where he saw a large, brightly lit hall.

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CHAPTER 246
STRANGE OMEN

Aaron and Talim left the Quelaag Club after they separately completed the nomination form. It wasn't a weekend; the former had two more operations in the afternoon, and the latter had to teach Viscount Conrad's youngest son horse-riding. The teenager needed to ensure that he didn't embarrass himself during the Backlund social events in the second half of the year.

Klein watched the manservant dressed in a red vest and a maid in a beautiful dress come and go a few times before finally delivering him his own proof of membership and a badge with the symbol of the Frost constellation engraved on it.

"An entry fee of 50 pounds. There are still three and a half months left this year, with an annual fee of 4 pounds a year." The manservant in the red vest pushed the two objects to Klein.

Klein took out the 57 pounds which Mary Gale had given him and handed him 54 pounds.

The amount beyond the entry fee and annual fee was Mary's first payment. She was very pleased with how quickly Klein obtained information on Doragu Gale's mistress, as well as her photo.

*50 pounds membership… Madam Mary is such a generous lady! *While Klein watched the manservant and the maid verify the money and confirm the exact amount, he recalled Stelyn Sammer's private introduction.

Mary's father was a co-founder of the Coim Company and had a 20 percent stake. It was originally just a small company that barely made money, but as

Backlund's pollution worsened and the demand for anthracite and charcoal increased, the company rapidly expanded to become one of the top ten companies in the capital's industry. As such, Mary's net worth skyrocketed.

The only problem was that when she was married to Doragu Gale, the company was still quite an unknown company. Her father hadn't paid much attention to using the shares as her dowry and didn't proceed with any protection of estate gifting and had instead used the more popular "willing of gifts."

The former referred to the dowry as an independent and separate estate of the woman and not subjected to her husband's control. Even the right-of-use depended on the woman, while the latter assigned the dowry's ownership to the entire family. However, the husband had to immediately make a valid will to promise that if he passed away before his partner, the split of the estate would be two to four times the rights and interests of the dowry received. After which, the rest would proceed according to the normal inheritance laws which could effectively guarantee the livelihood of the widow.

If Mary initiated a divorce before she could get evidence of Doragu's adultery, the Coim Company shares would be divided equally between both parties.

Klein remembered Stelyn saying enviously, "The current value of those shares is currently close to 20,000 gold pounds. Adding the other property in their name, Mary is a truly wealthy lady. Once she's divorced, she will definitely become the target of many men in Backlund, including some nobles."

*That's only enough money for Miss Justice to assassinate Ambassador Bakerland twice… *Klein suddenly thought about that when he saw the red-vested manservant and the good-looking maid bow at him.

"Mr. Moriarty, welcome to the Quelaag Club."

Upon hearing this, Klein picked up the proof of membership and the Frost badge.

The former was made of elastic paper which looked like a card with Klein's name and his membership start date on it.

After applying an imprint of his index finger, the proof of membership was officially ready for use.

The latter was the Quelaag Club's distinctive badge, named for its founding in early November, which corresponded to the month of the Frost constellation. The symbol and the number 192 were printed on the front, followed by "Sherlock Moriarty" imprinted on the back.

"The club now has 192 members?" Klein asked casually.

"Yes, our club doesn't accept people without a recommendation." The red-vested manservant beamed and introduced, "On the first floor, there's a buffet cafeteria, bar, library, squash room, conference room, and card room. You can use them all for free. The food and wine are free for your sampling as well. There are 16 lounge rooms and two small conference rooms on the second floor. They are also free, and can be used as long as they aren't occupied…"

The good-looking maid pointed to the rear and said, "There are two tennis courts on the lawn, totally free of charge. There are two shooting ranges underground, and you only need to pay the corresponding rental fee of the equipment.

"If you aren't satisfied with the simple buffet, you can order ala-carte. We have an exclusive chef, and you just need to pay for the ingredients."

Board, lodging, and entertainment are all provided for… As expected of a high-end club… Klein sincerely thanked Mrs. Mary.

He smiled warmly and said, "Send someone to show me around so that I can familiarize myself with the environment. Afterward, give me a lounge to take an afternoon nap."

"Alright." The red manservant made an inviting gesture.

After familiarizing himself with the Quelaag Club's environment, Klein entered a lounge and carefully studied the layout of the place. He discovered it was similar to a hotel room of the later generation. It was said to be decorated in the Intis-style.

*I have to consider how to obtain evidence of Doragu's affair tomorrow. It's simply impossible to hide the flash of the camera… In other words, I only have one shot at taking a picture… And if I do that, I'll definitely be kicked out of the club… I have to think of a safe way… I'll read through the papers later and try to determine the progress regarding Ian's case through the news. From there, I can determine which three days I should be guarded… *Klein paced back and forth, lost in thought.

At that moment, his heart suddenly palpitated as he tensed up.

Is this the premonition of a Clown? However, there are no scenes in my mind… Klein felt the air around him turn still like it was the calm before the storm.

Soon, this feeling disappeared, as if nothing had happened.

Could it be that danger is approaching? But nothing like this happened when I was attacked by Meursault… Puzzled, Klein pulled out a coin and divined if he would be attacked in the next few days.

The answer was negative.

After thinking for a few seconds, Klein drew the curtains and pretended to take an afternoon nap. He took four steps counterclockwise and went above the gray fog.

He sat down and pondered for a long time before muttering to himself, "I will be in grave danger in the next few days."

…

After repeating the statement, he flicked the coin again and saw the copper-colored object tumble down and land in his open palm.

This time, the portrait of the king was facing up!

It meant a positive result!

My reaction just now really was an omen that danger is coming… Klein narrowed his eyes and leaned back in his chair.

He was rather puzzled by this matter.

Whether it was as a Seer or Clown, they had never displayed such abilities before. Even if they could predict danger, it was because the target was right in front of him or beside him!

*There was nobody around me… From the fact that my divination was misled, it must have involved a relatively higher Sequencer, most likely Bakerland's assistant… In the end, it actually gave me a premonition? This isn't scientific, uh—this isn't mystic… There must be something else behind it, but I can't be certain why yet… *Klein looked around and saw the boundless fog, crimson and still, the palace standing as it had always stood.

He reined in his doubts and temporarily stopped thinking about the reason. Instead, he focused his attention on the attack that was about to occur…

After several more divinations, Klein found that he could only confirm that there would be great danger in the next few days. It couldn't be shortened to three days, two days, or even five hours.

In other words, he could only obtain a somewhat vague revelation.

And in a dream divination, he saw Ian dressed in his old coat, standing in the street with the elegant gas lamps and the blurry crimson moon behind him.

Other than this image, there was nothing else.

"How should I interpret this?" Klein thought for a moment. He could only assume that this was the prelude to danger.

Without further delay, he returned to the real world, left the Quelaag Club, and went to the nearby Hillston branch of the Backlund Bank to withdraw the remaining hundred pounds from his account—the sum of 1000 pounds from Justice hasn't been cleared yet and reconciled. Without the corresponding information sent to the branches, the account wasn't synchronized, and, theoretically speaking, there was a loophole. Klein could withdraw 100 pounds from another branch and seize the opportunity when all the accounts were out of sync.

However, this was only in theory. In order to avoid similar acts, the banks had many rules on anonymous accounts. First, it was to enhance the transmission of similar information in the same city; second, it was to limit a single withdrawal to no more than 500 pounds, and third, if the last withdrawal wasn't done locally, a telegram was needed to inquire about it, and today, Klein encountered the third situation.

Putting away the money, he took a horse carriage to the Backlund Bridge area and entered the Bravehearts Bar.

Under Kaspars's guidance, he saw Maric sitting in the card room. He wasn't surrounded by zombies.

Klein discarded the idea of using his spirituality to wrap Azik's copper whistle, slapped a 100 pounds on the table, and said to the pale Maric, "I agree to the deal.

"I'll pay an advance of 100 pounds. I'll pay another 300 pounds every additional day I'm protected.

"The protection begins now!"

Maric's gaze fell past him and landed somewhere behind him. He nodded and said, "Alright, she has agreed."

Ah? Klein turned back in surprise only to see the wall and nothing but air.

He secretly activated his Spirit Vision, he but failed to discover anything.

Maric stuffed the 100 pounds into his pocket and said indifferently, "You can return now. She has begun protecting you, in a hidden way."

If I hadn't divined this beforehand, I would definitely think of all of you as cheats… Klein surveyed his surroundings and deliberately acted as though he left with clenched teeth.

Along the way, he would occasionally activate and deactivate his Spirit Vision, constantly observing the outside through the carriage windows, but he didn't find his so-called bodyguard.

Back at 15 Minsk Street, Klein closed the door, went into the bathroom, turned on the tap, and washed his hands.

The sound of water splashing disappeared as he shook off the water droplets and wiped his palms with a towel. Then, he raised his head to look at himself in the mirror to inspect his appearance.

At this moment, he saw himself phasing away in the mirror before transforming into a woman wearing a black regal dress.

The woman had light golden hair and blue eyes. She looked very delicate but her face was abnormally pale.

She wore a small black bonnet, lifted her skirt, and bowed at Klein.

This… Without hiding his surprise, Klein took a few steps back and leaned against the wall.

Only then did he realize that this might be the bodyguard he had hired for 1000 pounds.

The image in the mirror quickly dimmed and Klein saw himself again. Everything had been restored back to normal.

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CHAPTER 247
THE WHOLE STORY

The figure in the mirror was clear, but it was as though the woman in the black regal dress had never appeared.

Klein secretly activated his Spirit Vision, but didn't find anything.

Did I just hire a female ghost as my bodyguard? She's even stranger than a female ghost… At the very least, one can see ghosts with Spirit Vision… Klein thoughtfully touched Azik's copper whistle in his pocket, feeling nothing but its cold chill. Like before, it didn't have any additional changes.

She's unaffected by the copper whistle… Seems like she isn't an undead creature… However, I can't be sure. Back then, the copper whistle was buried with me, but the corpses surrounding me didn't act abnormally… Was it because those buried in the cemetery have experienced a send off by the priests and bishops? When does it work and when doesn't it… When this business with the ambassador is over, and if I'm still alive, I'll go to the cemetery and try to figure out the scope of its effect and its limits. I can't always carry a time bomb like this… Klein washed his face and walked out of the bathroom.

Just as he picked up the newspaper in the living room and was going to read it in the living room or bedroom, he heard the doorbell ring.

Klein's mind tensed up when he heard the tinkling sounds. He put on his coat, with all kinds of materials in it, and walked towards the door gingerly.

He clearly knew that danger was approaching in the next few days!

After standing behind the door and waiting for a moment, the scene outside naturally surfaced in Klein's mind.

The crimson moon was faintly discernible in the sky. The elegant gas lamps on both sides of the street lit up the wet road. A boy wearing an old coat stood there. His bright red eyes were deep and adrift.

Ian Wright? Why did he appear? Isn't this what I saw in my dream divination? Is this the prelude to danger? Klein opened the door and took two cautious steps back.

"Detective Moriarty," Ian took off his brown top hat, bowed, and said in a low voice, "I came to apologize. I'm sorry to have involved you in such a dangerous matter."

Klein creased his eyebrows and probed, "What you should've done is head to the police station."

Ian looked around and bowed his head.

"I just came out from MI9."

Ah? Is that the name of the military's special department? Klein stepped aside, pointed at the living room and said, "Maybe we can have a chat."

I have to at least know what placed me in this situation… He sighed inwardly.

Ian didn't stand on ceremony as he followed Klein into the living room and sat in the same spot as he did the last time.

He was just about to open his mouth when Klein suddenly added, "If what you plan on saying will put me in greater danger, then there's no need to tell me about it."

"No, everything will soon be over." Ian had a calmness that was beyond his age.

Klein was relieved and asked out of curiosity, "So, what exactly happened?"

Before he could finish his sentence, he saw a figure emerge from the panes of the oriel window across the room: a black regal dress, long hair tied in a bun, blue eyes, delicate features, and a pale face. It was the woman who had previously greeted Klein in the mirror.

This woman seemed to find an illusory high back chair and sat down. Her left palm supported her right elbow while her right hand supported her face, pretending to listen attentively while appearing expressionless.

For a moment, Klein was left at a loss.

Ian, who had been silent for a few seconds, said softly, "In fact, Detective Zreal is a spy for the Feysac Empire. He adopted several vagrant children and taught them how to gather intelligence. I am one of them."

So that's how it is… I was involved in a huge spy conspiracy… Klein suddenly felt enlightened.

Ian looked at the coffee table and continued, "We have the advantage of age, and are often ignored by others, allowing us to gather a lot of useful information. Two weeks ago, I stumbled upon clues regarding Helmosuin's manuscript."

"Helmosuin?" Klein found the name familiar.

Ian looked up at him and explained, "Turani von Helmosuin, the greatest scientist after Emperor Roselle, a mathematician, a mechanist, and the father of the second generation difference machine."

So it's him! Klein suddenly remembered the relevant information.

He wasn't only a great scientist, but also a crazy scientist. He believed that the inherent flaw in the existence of humans could only be fixed through machines. He loved eating sugar as if it was his own energy source. He mysteriously disappeared while researching a third generation difference machine, and was an important figure that every country was trying to find.

"His manuscript? Does the manuscript involve third generation difference machines?" Klein asked probingly.

A difference machine was a mechanical device for computing. It could effectively improve the efficiency of scientific research and various projects. In Klein's opinion, it was an alternative computer in the Age of Steam. Of course, it could only do computation at present.

Ian shook his head.

"I'm not sure. I didn't actually see it. Perhaps, it had some related ideas."

He paused for a moment, then went on to recount what had happened.

"When I reported this to Detective Zreal, he was very happy and told me to follow up on that lead while he immediately reported it to his superior.

"It took me some time to determine where the manuscript was, but I was afraid of the danger, so I didn't steal it directly. I decided to return to Detective Zreal, and after that, it was as I told you. Detective Zreal's house was infiltrated while many of the tiny traps were not restored, and he didn't respond to my contact request. The Zmanger gang tried to capture me…

"With your help, I confirmed the death of Detective Zreal. I took a fake tooth from his corpse. Oh, that happened after we parted.

"Detective Zreal told me that, inscribed on the inside of the fake tooth, there was a method to urgently contact his superior. It was a method that even he didn't know of and was something he would only remove if an accident occurred."

Klein nodded slightly and said, "So you sent a telegram?"

A rare look of surprise flashed across Ian's face as he asked, "Did the people from MI9 tell you that?"

"No, a friend of mine happened to see you on Bacardi Street." Klein casually made up an excuse.

"I see." Ian nodded in depression. "I got in touch with Detective Zreal's superior in Backlund via telegram and arranged the time, place, and manner of meeting, but soon enough, I was found by the Zmanger gang. No, to be exact, it was an intelligence officer of the Intis Republic. That was what the people from MI9 people told me.

"Fortunately, MI9 arrived in time, and both sides engaged in a chaotic battle. I took this opportunity to escape.

"However, when I met with Detective Zreal's superior this afternoon, I was once again ambushed by the Intis intelligence officers. Unfortunately, I was caught by them, and I was very afraid of dying, so I told them everything that I knew. However, they didn't keep their promise and still wanted to kill me. At that moment, MI9 finally found me."

It is only during such times when you look like a fifteen or sixteen year old teenager… Just as Klein was reflecting over this, he suddenly thought of a problem from what Ian had just said.

Back when he discovered that something important was left behind on Zreal's corpse and that Ian had successfully taken it away, he had written the matter off, thinking that the Beyonder was lacking in skill, and that the Beyonder had missed out on something because the mediumship provided little useful information.

However, after confirming that the ambassador had a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Seer pathway, the situation became extremely peculiar.

With powerful mediumship, it was impossible for the fake tooth to not be discovered.

Leaving the body in such a remote and hard to find place didn't seem like a trap.

Combined with Ian's description, the answer was obvious.

Klein nodded and said, "Have you ever thought of the possibility that Zreal's superior has traitors around him, a traitor who has defected to the Intis intelligence services?

"That's also why Zreal was exposed and killed when he obtained the clue to the manuscript, as well as why you were ambushed."

It was because the Intis ambassador had information about Zreal's superior which was why he didn't pay much attention to the urgent communication method inscribed on the inside of the tooth!

Zreal's report to his superior directly led to his demise!

Ian fell into a daze when he heard that. It took him quite a while before he clenched his fists in anger, trying hard to compose himself as he said, "I didn't think of that. You really are an excellent detective…”

He quietly let out a breath of air and changed the topic.

"I have divulged the whereabouts of the manuscript to MI9 and everything else. They also mentioned your predicament in passing. Heh, they didn't suspect me of lying, nor did they send anyone to watch me. All of them went to vie for the manuscript. However, with that kind of pressure, no one can lie."

Having said that, Ian stood up and gave a deep bow.

"Please allow me to apologize again.

"Sorry to have involved you in this. Actually, you don't need to hide anything for me."

Having understood the entire situation, Klein smiled and said, "No, the main problem in this matter was because I made a mistake that made me end up in my current situation."

As he was listening, he used Ian's description of the entire situation and his reflections of the past few days and confirmed that he had made two mistakes.

When I discovered that Ian's matter ran deeper than it appeared, I still accepted the request. That wasn't a problem since I only felt that it involved gangs, and there would be, at most, one or two Beyonders who wouldn't dare expose themselves. But the divination lacked enough information and ended with a failure… This was within the limits of what I could've resolved by myself, and typically speaking, there wouldn't have been any trouble. I could even take the opportunity to come into contact with Backlund's Beyonders.

After finding Zreal's corpse and confirming that the matter ran deep, I should've considered the sensitivity of my identity and decisively extricated myself from this case. I should've let Ian deal with the subsequent matters himself. This wouldn't be problematic and would be a rather careful choice.

One of the mistakes I made was that I didn't flinch or reveal anything about Ian when Meursault came to me. I only thought that he was from a gang, and that there were some Beyonders behind that gang. Who would've guessed that it would involve a figure like the Intis ambassador; even more so, I never expected Meursault to be so rash. After failing his mission, he didn't threaten, intimidate me or proceed with other options. Instead, he came straight to kill me so that mediumship could be performed. He didn't even give me the chance to regret my decision. As a result, my situation worsened.

So, this isn't too subjective or too serious a mistake.

The one mistake that really caused me to be in such a passive situation was a tiny mistake I made from the very beginning. I had rented the house and accepted the mission as Sherlock Moriarty without donning a disguise!

This resulted in me not being able to flee after my identity as a Beyonder was exposed to the ambassador. Even as I acted horrified and frantic, making MI9 and the police department believe that my taking flight would only be normal, I didn't dare flee. I was afraid that when the ambassador failed to find a target for revenge, he would inform the officials about me. And according to my experience as a Nighthawk, most official enforcers like the Nighthawks, Machinery Hivemind, and Mandated Punishers harbor animosity towards uncontrolled Beyonders. They definitely wouldn't ignore me just because I'm a Low-Sequence Beyonder and would begin an investigation.

In time, my looks will be clear evidence. I will then be pursued by High-Sequence Beyonders from the Church of the Goddess because I resurrected despite having been involved with a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact.

There's no chance for such matters to be suddenly forgotten or thought of as nothing by others. I had to plan for the worst case scenario in advance, and if I only reacted when the ambassador took action, it would definitely be too late. Whether it's an assassination, finding a bodyguard, or buying items, all of them will require time.

Only if the ambassador and his assistant dies or attention is diverted to the investigation of his death will I be able to resolve this latent danger. His assistant doesn't have an official status, so he can't interact with the officials. For a mere Sequence 9 or Sequence 8 at best, someone whose whereabouts are unknown, there's no reason to go through the effort to report me.

Of course, his death is the best outcome, then there won't be any latent danger.

Compared to finding Mr. Azik for help or having attention placed on me because of 0-08 again, as well as being pursued by High-Sequence Beyonders, assassinating the ambassador is the relatively simpler choice… Even it fails, I can only bear one of the two outcomes…

Sigh, everything originated from a small oversight at the beginning. I just imagined that in a metropolis with over 5 million people and few people knowing me while I deliberately avoided the Nighthawks, there was no need for me to don a disguise every day, since it would be easier for others to notice something amiss. Yet, for such a small mistake, I would have to pay over 10,000 gold pounds as the price without having any guarantee of resolving it…

I'm really like a Clown, with one mistake triggering a chain reaction, only to result in a desperate attempt to balance myself so as to please the audience…

This is all because of my lack of experience. This is the first time in my two lifetimes combined that I've ever been a fugitive.

Once this matter is completely resolved, exposing my identity as a Beyonder would no longer be that dangerous. They would only think that I obtained a potion while finding a bodyguard and not doubt my origins. Of course, I'll have to get used to wearing glasses and a mustache in the future so that the people around me will gradually get used to my new image. In the future when they ask me about me, they will only think of this new image.

Having thought through the entire matter, Klein's laugh became more pronounced, making Ian feel strange.

"It's time for me to leave. I'll need to disappear for a while; otherwise, I might be thrown into jail." Ian put on his hat, bade farewell, and left.

Klein didn't stop him, watching him disappear into the crimson moonlight, while the woman by the oriel window had disappeared without him realizing it.

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CHAPTER 248
WAITING FROM BOTH SIDES

With both sides being aware of the whereabouts of Helmosuin's manuscript, this matter would come to an end tonight… Therefore, the ambassador would have the freedom to take revenge… Is this the reason for the impending danger? Klein gained a rough understanding of the divination results and the inexplicable omen.

If he didn't have the Language of Foulness charm or the powerful bodyguard that cost him 1000 pounds for three days, he would've shamelessly gone to the police station or the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery's headquarters in Backlund, Saint Hierländ Cathedral for a temporary stay. He could avoid any possible attacks and await the assassination of the ambassador. As for how successful the assassination would be, Klein wasn't confident either. He had already considered the worst outcome and had a plan for it.

But now, with the double the preparations, he no longer wanted to avoid it. He would stay at home and pretend that he knew nothing.

Deep down, he was even looking forward to having his attackers come knocking at his door.

*Sequence 9 Hunter Meursault was killed by me. If they send someone else again, They would at least be a Sequence 7, or even a Sequence 6 or 5. They might even come in numbers, but regardless, as long as I finish them, I'll obtain formulas and Beyonder characteristics. I can then make up for some of my losses… Yes, I'll tell Miss Bodyguard that I had good luck and managed to benefit from the black ear that I bought and became a Beyonder. After all, when the battle becomes intense, there's no way to hide

it at that point. Besides, what I'm saying is nearly the truth. I did benefit quite significantly from the black ear… * As Klein considered what would soon follow, he almost instinctively drew the sign of the crimson moon on his chest.

May the Goddess bless me that the Beyonder who comes is the one from the Seer pathway! He prayed silently.

As he thought of this, he looked around the room for his bodyguard. He was worried that she would run away without a sound after hearing the whole story.

The lights in the dining room were warm, illuminating the coffee table, sofa, and chairs. There was no one else in the room except him.

As Klein gradually grew nervous, he suddenly saw a face appear on the glass cover of the gas lamp in the living room. The face was pale, with pale gold hair and delicate looks.

This lady is quite confident in her own strength… Klein's mind calmed down, and he whispered to himself, "I'm also a Beyonder.

"I made a gamble on an item I bought from Kaspars's gathering and benefited from it, but it was only beneficial for me."

What he said was true. No matter what method he had to face, these sentences would endure a truth test.

But when these two sentences were put together, one would think that the benefits made him a Beyonder.

The face on the glass cover nodded slightly and quickly disappeared without any other reaction.

Klein's expression didn't seem to change, but he secretly exhaled in his heart.

Without taking off his coat, he went back to the sofa and picked up a newspaper and started reading.

After a while, the tinkling sound echoed again. Someone had rung his doorbell again.

Who is it? Klein immediately tensed up. He stuffed his hands into his pockets, touching his tarot cards and Language of Foulness charm.

He slowly walked towards the door, and with the help of his abilities as a Clown, he predicted what he would see after opening the door.

The crimson moon was still faintly visible, the elegant gas lamps were unchanged, and a sergeant in a black-and-white checkered uniform with three chevrons on his epaulets was impatiently waiting by the door.

He had a short, brown beard and he was none other than the sergeant who had dealt with Sherlock Moriarty's case of self-defense.

I think Jurgen mentioned his name. Sergeant Faxine? Well, I can receive the ten-pound bail tomorrow or the next day… What is he doing here? Did MI9 send him to find Ian Wright? Or to inform me that I should temporarily hide away from danger? Confused, Klein grabbed the handle.

…

Inside the Intis embassy of Backlund's West Borough, the lights were on. The scent of various perfumes and alcohol, accompanied by melodious melodies stretched out to every corner.

A ball was being held.

During his years as an ambassador, Bakerland had often held balls at the embassy, inviting the kingdom's bankers, big factory owners, philanthropists, and other well-known, rich and powerful people, as well as

lawyers. Random opportunities were also given to some of the lower-ranked merchants.

In this atmosphere, he would tell the guests about the prosperity and openness of Trier, and how the Intis Republic was no longer dominated by the likes of the nobles, bankers, factory owners, and lawyers. They, directly and indirectly, took over a large portion of the parliamentary seats, determining the direction of the government policies, enjoying true freedom and high statuses.

Today, Bakerland was doing the same thing. With a wine glass in hand, he flitted around the guests, as if to prove that he was present at the ball without leaving.

They should've gotten the manuscript by now… After learning that Ian Wright appeared at the telegraph office from that trembling detective, I've been putting plans into action. Now is the time to reap the rewards… Bakerland, with his thin but classy face, took a sip of the blood-like Aurmir wine and headed for the balcony, intending to take a breath of the cool night air.

After learning that Ian had sent the telegram, as a veteran conspiracist and professional intelligence officer, Bakerland was acutely aware that Ian was contacting his superior's superior. Therefore, he quickly made the double-spy, that had infiltrated the Feysac Empire's Backlund intelligence team, investigate and obtain the meeting time, location, and manner agreed upon by Ian and the "team leader."

After that, he pretended that nothing had happened and continued to send people to look for Ian near Bacardi Street. He successfully found Ian and also attracted the attention of MI9.

According to his plan, his intelligence officer had deliberately let Ian go, so that MI9 would think that they were on the same starting line.

After paralyzing his main opponent, he called in other unexposed intelligence agents to ambush Ian and the Feysac Empire's "team leader." He wanted to find the manuscript and smuggle it out of the Loen Kingdom without being detected by the MI9.

The situation had progressed as smoothly as he had expected, but the news that came back in the evening left his heart heavy.

People from MI9 had actually appeared!

They had appeared despite being supposedly fooled!

With Rosago around, it's definitely not because of divination. Besides MI9 isn't good at divination at all… That means we have a spy among our ranks… Let's hope that Rosago can be one step ahead of them and grab the manuscript to hand over to Shadow for extraction… Bakerland had deliberately organized the ball in order to avoid suspicion, but as such, he was unable to involve himself with the developments. All he could do was pray that his subordinates would amount to something.

According to his plans, once Rosago succeeded, he would immediately transfer the items to another intelligence officer, one that had never been activated before. Then Rosago would lure MI9 away and, by creating some trouble, keep them out of "sight" and distract them from his partner. During this process, Bakerland requested Rosago to kill the detective while he was at it.

If it wasn't for him, no one from MI9 would've known about it. Everything would've gone smoothly… My involvement with the Zmanger gang wouldn't have been revealed, and I wouldn't be transferred back to the country… He actually didn't run away, thinking that MI9 would keep protecting him, and that staying at home is safer than running away? Bakerland rubbed his face.

He had already received orders that after the operation regarding the manuscript had been completed, and he would hand all intelligence matters

to the highest ranking military officer at the embassy and await the arrival of the new ambassador.

Bakerland was rather reluctant to part with Backlund. Despite the bad weather and heavy pollution, Backlund was one of the most prosperous cities in the world.

Besides, the ladies here are more conservative unlike those sluts back home. Slowly seducing them into bed and removing their restraint, bit by bit, is a very satisfying and fascinating achievement. Unfortunately, I have to bid farewell to these beautiful ladies… Bakerland thought gloomily, and he felt more and more resentful of the detective who dared to put up resistance.

As for Rosago's own safety, Bakerland wasn't worried at all. He believed that as long as Rosago wanted to, as long as he wasn't targeted by a High-Sequence Beyonder, he would be able to escape immediately. This was because Rosago had special Beyonder powers.

As he lost himself in thought, Bakerland's eyes suddenly lit up. He saw a young lady in a crimson dress standing at the edge of the balcony with a glass of wine in her hand.

She had a pretty face and a gentle temperament. Her hair was ink black and luxuriant, and her light brown eyes seemed to speak volumes.

Bakerland went over at once and began to chat with her. He learned that the lady was the daughter of a timber merchant named Eileen, and that her father wasn't very rich and was trying to make his way up the ranks.

With his status as Intis ambassador, Bakerland quickly received Eileen's affection.

After sharing two dances, their bodies became more intimate.

"Beautiful lady, I'd like to invite you to my room to sample some Aurmir wine of 1286."

Eileen replied, almost without any hesitation, "Alright."

The two of them left the ballroom and secretly went to the second floor. They entered Bakerland's room, and he ordered the guards to stay away from them and not to disturb him.

Before the so-called Aurmir wine 1286 appeared, Bakerland had passionately brought Eileen to the bed.

While romping around in bed, Eileen's simple skirt came undone as her pure, fair arms hugged him.

While her hands gripped Bakerland's shoulders, her nails and veins suddenly sprouted black, thin, fluffy "spider feet!"

Bang!

Eileen's eyes suddenly bulged as white foam poured out of her mouth.

Bakerland retracted the fist that he had used to hit her abdomen and stood up from the bed. He no longer had the hasty actions from before and instead, wore a cold expression.

"Who sent you?" Bakerland asked in a deep voice.

Eileen attempted to stand up, but the pain was too much to bear. Her eyes were filled with shock and fear.

Seeing the expression on the pretty girl's face, Bakerland smiled and said, "It's true that I'm into beautiful ladies, but I know this problem of mine. So, every time I meet a beautiful lady, I'm especially careful.

"Speak, who sent you?

"Don't bother resisting. I'm very good at using fire."

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CHAPTER 249
THE ASSASSINATION

Eileen clamped her mouth shut and angrily looked at the thin, smiling face of the ambassador, with a touch of terror.

Bakerland stretched out his right hand which was covered in a plume of orange flames that danced silently.

He took two steps forward, making a gesture as if he was pressing his palm against Eileen's skin.

This made Eileen think of the descriptions in many novels in which cruel interrogators would use red-hot iron to brand their target's body, bringing about an extremely painful experience.

"No, I can't be that brutal to such a beautiful lady." Bakerland suddenly stopped his outstretched right palm and chuckled softly.

He shook suddenly, turning the orange flame into a long red whip.

The long whip ignited the air around it which took on the form of thorns.

Pow!

Bakerland lashed his flaming whip at Eileen, burning her clothes and leaving a dark mark on her skin. Her face contorted as she screamed.

"Who sent you?" Bakerland asked again in a gentle voice.

Eileen's lips quivered a few times before she finally opened them.

"It was…”

As Bakerland subconsciously listened for the answer, his eyes suddenly turned bloodshot.

Oh no! Bakerland jerked back and rolled to the ground.

In the spot where he had been standing, a flame rose up and formed a wall of fire.

Splat! Splat! Splat! Rain-like blood and flesh splattered against the wall and produced sizzling sounds.

Some of them penetrated the flame, leaving a thin trail of blood on the ground.

At the end of this path was the Intis ambassador, Bakerland, who had stood up once again.

He saw that Eileen's abdomen had been torn open and two arms wrapped in viscous liquid were sticking out from inside.

With a sudden push of the two arms, a figure drilled its way out from the belly of the beautiful Eileen. "It" was covered in a thick, squirming blood-red liquid that continuously dripped down, and it was about the size of an adult male.

It was hard to imagine that a normal woman like Eileen, with no protrusion in her abdomen, would actually have such a thing hidden inside her body!

How was it stored in there!?

Boom!

The body below Eileen's head exploded completely, turning into pure flesh and blood, surging into the form of a humanoid figure, and mixing with the

dripping liquid to turn into a strange red robe.

The figure revealed its true appearance. It was so beautiful that it looked like a woman. The blood-red robe it wore looked like a blossoming flower under the illumination of the flames.

"Rose Bishop!" As a veteran intelligence officer, Bakerland immediately identified the name of the corresponding Sequence before him.

Sequence 6 of the Secrets Suppliant pathway, Rose Bishop.

Every Rose Bishop was an expert when it came to flesh and blood magic!

Beyonders at this Sequence could hide inside the bodies of others, thereby avoiding all sorts of investigations.

But the moment they emerge, the hosts would lose their lives.

"For the Lord!" Eileen's remaining head let out a low cry and closed her eyes forever.

The Rose Bishop stretched out its right hand and tapped its chest four times in the order of bottom to top, right to left.

With the color of blood and the light from the flames reflecting in his eyes, he looked at Bakerland and took a sudden step forward with his right foot, passing through the wall of fire. He didn't receive any damage from the fire, with only dark red liquid that continuously dripped down.

Bakerland retreated once again as he suddenly raised his voice.

"Someone! Help me!"

Although his most capable assistant, Rosago, and several intelligence agents had been sent on a mission, there was still no lack of Beyonders in the embassy. They were military officials who had received permission

from the Loen Kingdom. They were the defensive forces that were available!

One Sequence 5, one Sequence 6, three Sequence 7s, and a combination of nearly ten Sequence 8s and 9s.

Bakerland's voice echoed around the room, but it didn't exit the premises. The music outside didn't stop and the ball continued.

It was as though the room had become a completely isolated world!

"This…" Bakerland stopped his shouting, narrowed his eyes, and looked around.

The Rose Bishop was in no hurry to act. He said with a chuckle, "It was by your own will, the rules that were decided by yourself.

"You told the guards not to disturb you or come near, or let anyone close.

"Yes… I simply magnified your will and rules and made a slight distortion. If you want to escape this isolation, you have to defeat yourself."

Bakerland's expression changed slightly. What appeared to be the compliance of rules was, in fact, a distortion of them. The characteristic of using the power of authority to serve oneself made him think of another Sequence's name.

"Baron of Corruption!" Bakerland growled.

This was the Lawyer pathway, which was Sequence 6 of the Dark Emperor pathway.

Before he could finish his sentence, Bakerland's face suddenly turned extremely gloomy as he blurted out, "Shepherd! You're a Shepherd!

"Who are you from the Aurora Order? Mr. A?

"Why are you assassinating me?

The Rose Bishop, no—Shepherd chuckled.

"You don't need to know who I am.

"Accept the Lord's blessings…”

His body suddenly stiffened before he could finish his sentence. It was as though his joints were covered in rust, and he seemed to have turned into a puppet.

Bakerland laughed rapturously. The gloominess from before disappeared in an instant. He took out a white handkerchief from his left breast pocket and wiped the corner of his mouth.

"I'm glad that you were able to chat with me for so long. It gave me enough time."

After the white handkerchief was taken away, a thumb-sized head emerged from his left breast pocket. It was the head of a puppet with completely black eyes!

The Shepherd opened his mouth and was about to speak when he heard a hollow voice that seemed to come from afar.

"You…”

After pausing, his body suddenly burgeoned, and his skin turned dark. Two curved goat horns with strange, sinister patterns sprouted from his head, as well as wings behind his back that reeked of sulfur when they flapped.

The Shepherd instantly moved three meters forward, having transformed into a devil-like creature.

But even so, it was as if every one of his joints was firmly shackled. His movements were stiff and slow, and his thoughts were starting to blur.

"You still have the power of the Devil? As expected of a Shepherd, let me send you to your Lord." Without further ado, a flaming long spear with a blazing white tip materialized in the middle of Bakerland's right palm.

He bent his back, about to throw the spear to pin the Shepherd to the wall and burn him to ashes.

Sequence 7 Pyromaniac of the Conspiracist pathway had the ancient name, Fire Mage!

Cough! Cough! Cough! Cough!

At that moment, Bakerland began to cough violently, coughing so hard that he felt as if he was about to spit out his heart and lungs. His flaming spear lost control from his coughing and disappeared, inch by inch. His face flushed red and his forehead was scorching hot from his coughing fit.

His influence on his enemy, that he derived from a mystical item, was lifted. The Shepherd was freed from his sluggishness and returned to normal.

"Why do you think I was having such a long chat with you? How does severe pneumonia and an unstoppable cough feel like?" the devilish face asked with the corners of his mouth hooked.

Upon hearing these words, Bakerland suddenly recalled the enemy's beautiful and enchanting appearance when he first appeared, and regretfully said, "Cough! Cough. A disease!

"You… Cough! Cough! Killed a… Cough! Cough! Cough! A Demoness of Affliction!"

The Shepherd dispelled his devil-like form as his figure turned into a series of stacked afterimages.

He chuckled and said, "No, I only received a gift from Saint Tenebrous."

"I know Conspiracists have all sorts of means available to them, so, I'll be using my strongest ability now, so that you won't have any unnecessary hope."

A book appeared before him, a translucent and blurry book.

The ancient book flipped rapidly and with a soft chant, "I came, I saw, I record.

"As long as I have recorded it, I'll be able to use it once. This is an ability that Saint Tenebrous had deliberately demonstrated to me. Although I only have half of its original effect, it's still enough." The Shepherd's voice turned hollow, and his body was enveloped by the darkness that spewed out from the book.

He quickly turned into a small giant, about 2.3 to 2.4 meters tall. His entire body was covered in cold, black armor. At the space where his eyes should be, there were two glowing crimson red blobs.

The dark knight raised a broadsword in his hands, took a step forward, and delivered an unrelenting chop.

"No! Why?"

As Bakerland tragically screamed, the layers of flames that gushed out of his body were split apart. All sorts of lights exploded and were split open, and his body was split into two halves.

Thud! Bakerland fell to the ground. No blood came out of his massive wound. Even his soul seemed to be corroded and destroyed by the black sword that didn't seem to exist.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The plumes of fire that spewed out of Bakerland's body lost control, causing the blast that shook the room and sent the glass rattling. And at that moment, the isolation that had been created by his own will vanished with his death.

The Shepherd didn't stop, nor did he wait for the Beyonder characteristic to appear. He restored his inconspicuous appearance and seized the opportunity before the military officials of the embassy arrived, sprinting through the layers of walls and into the darkness outside.

…

At 15 Minsk Street, Klein paused with his right hand on the handle.

He decided to throw a coin before he opened the door.

Since Ian had already come, the revelation that he had seen in the dream had already happened. That meant that danger could come at any moment!

While muttering the words "the visitor outside will bring danger," Klein flicked up a quarter pence and watched it fall to his palm, its number side facing up.

Negative… Klein muttered to himself as he reached for the handle.

However, he didn't let his guard down. He knew that there was a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the same pathway as him on the ambassador's side who could interfere with his divination.

If it was that person, it would be normal for him to get the wrong result!

It's a pity that I don't have the time or an opportunity to investigate it above the gray fog… Klein looked through the door for a moment with his Spirit

Vision. Realizing that nothing was amiss, he opened the door and took two steps back.

Dressed in a black-and-white checkered uniform, Sergeant Faxine took off his hat and said with a serious expression, "I've been sent by the higher-ups to tell you that you must be careful tonight and tomorrow. Be careful of strangers."

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CHAPTER 250
RICH EXPERIENCE IN COURTING DEATH

"Alright." Klein nodded solemnly.

Sergeant Faxine touched his short hair and said, "There are other arrangements. I'll explain them to you in detail, and you can decide on your own."

He cast his gaze towards the living room.

Klein made a polite gesture of invitation, then watched as Sergeant Faxine closed the door behind him, walked over to the sofa, and sat down.

"What are your plans?" Klein kept his coat on, hands still in his pockets.

Faxine leaned forward slightly, clasped his hands, and said, "You should be well aware that you have offended that ambassador. Tonight or tomorrow will be the most dangerous period for you.

"The higher-ups have given you three choices. The first is to go to the Holy Wind Cathedral for two days. I know that you're a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery, but Saint Hierländ Cathedral is too far, and it's easy for trouble to arise on the way there."

Kleinn nodded indiscernibly and waited for the sergeant to give him the second choice.

Suddenly, his vision blurred and his head went numb. He felt as if there was a layer of thick glass around him.

He saw that Sergeant Faxine's opening and closing of his mouth was slowing down, and he noticed that his thoughts had become sluggish.

This feeling was very familiar. Klein suddenly thought of the puppet from the Antigonus family, Sealed Artifact 2-049!

Back then, he was repeatedly affected in a similar way, but he had been awakened by Captain Dunn Smith and the others. To ensure that the others could detect any abnormalities in a timely manner, they kept stretching and retracting their arms!

The Antigonus family holds the Seer pathway… This person's ability is similar to the Antigonus family's puppet… He is the Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Seer pathway… As expected, it's him… Klein came to his senses, but there was no Dunn Smith to wake him.

The muscles on Officer Faxine's face started squirming. Soon, he turned into a gentleman with black hair and blue eyes. He had a handsome face and a tiny stubble.

He said with a smile, "Given time, this is one of the most difficult abilities to deal with for anyone that isn't a High-Sequence Beyonder."

As he spoke, Klein saw the image of the woman in the black regal dress appear in the glass of the oriel window.

She walked slowly and stiffly out of the glass; her blonde hair, her delicate face, and her pale face made her seem more like a doll than a living person.

"I never thought that you would be able to hire such a powerful bodyguard. If it wasn't for my divination ahead of time, I might have died here. What kind of compensation did you pay? By the way, my name is Rosago."

Rosago didn't look back as he continued smiling at Klein, but he didn't expect a fluent answer from the man he controlled.

At that moment, he suddenly felt a cold breeze blow across his neck, causing his hair to stand on end as goosebumps appeared all over his body.

There seemed to be an invisible person at his back, breathing down his neck!

Rosago laughed, raised his left hand, and snapped his fingers.

Pow!

Flames suddenly soared up from his back, and a transparent shadow was set ablaze, quickly turning into ashes.

In Klein's vision, these motions were all broken down into a grid of images.

This wasn't because his opponent had turned slow, but was a result of his increasingly sluggish thoughts.

*He already has me under control… Why isn't he directly… killing me… Do all villains like to engage in lengthy monologues… No, he's not stupid… He's trying to conceal something with this discussion… *Klein tried to think, to figure out the problem, but his thoughts were moving at an irresistibly slow pace.

He looked intently at Rosago, taking in every detail of his.

Finally, he saw a figure in each of Rosago's eyes, a figure with blonde hair, blue eyes, a pale face, and a dark black Gothic regal dress!

And at this moment, the woman was still behind Rosago. She was still near the oriel window, walking towards him like a manipulated puppet.

He hasn't really controlled her yet… She's still trying to resist and struggle… They are tussling in the realm of mystery… I need to do something… I need to tip the scales of balance… Klein turned his attention to the Language of Foulness charm he was holding in his left hand. It was cold and slippery, filled with evil.

He was glad that he hadn't let down his guard and maintained a battle-ready state the entire time.

He could only injure himself to injure his opponent! Klein gathered his strength and struggled to speak.

His vocal cords seemed to have rotted, and his throat squirmed in difficulty.

He hoarsely said in ancient Hermes with a staccato rhythm, "Foulness!"

As his voice echoed in the air, Klein felt a corrosive pain in his left palm, and he heard illusory whispers that could drive a person mad.

This was a state that he was familiar with, and it didn't affect his subsequent attempts.

The attempt was to inject most of his spirituality into the Language of Foulness charm which didn't require the control of his body.

In three seconds, the voice of the True Creator would descend upon the physical world and burrow into the ears of the creature closest to him!

"3!"

The prelude, the din, the illusory, the evil whispers spread out in an instant. Klein felt his scalp tingle, his mind abuzz, his veins throbbing. He found it difficult to focus his mind.

A coffee table away from him, Rosago's expression had suddenly turned adrift. His face swelled up as the woman's figure in his eyes suddenly

became clearer.

"2!"

The pale woman in the black regal dress behind him quickened her actions, but soon, she frowned in pain.

At this moment, Klein felt the weakening of the influence as he wished, regaining his smooth thought processes and felt as though his joints were once again filled with lubricant!

Having experienced ravings all this time, he endured the madness and pain, quickly pulling out and throwing the Language of Foulness charm from his left palm at Rosago.

"1!"

The iron-black charm, with its many symbols and sinister-looking patterns, melted. Rosago had just regained some of his composure and was trying to leap to the side when he saw a rich darkness and heard a murmur that contained immense knowledge and extreme madness.

No human being was able to describe such a sound. All the veins in Rosago's head protruded as if they were about to explode.

He tumbled to the ground, writhing and struggling as his skin ruptured, inch by inch, revealing the flesh underneath.

At the same time, Klein and the blonde woman with blue eyes also failed to resist the pain as they fell to the ground. Each of them let out tragic screams, the excruciating pain felt like someone had stabbed their temples with a drill rod.

Their eyes turned bloodshot as red liquid ran down their noses. They could neither see nor feel the outside world.

The experienced Klein was the first to recover. He staggered to his feet and saw that Rosago had torn off his clothes and stripped off his skin, exposing his flesh and veins.

He was like a legendary red monster that had been skinned. He constantly tumbled around the ground while groaning in pain, as if he was about to lose control.

Klein didn't wait for the result, because he couldn't afford the possibility of the other party gaining the benefits, as well as becoming a devotee of the True Creator.

He believed that the evil god was definitely infuriated as well.

Pulling out his revolver and adjusting the barrel to the firing position, Klein took two steps forward, circled around the coffee table, and put the muzzle of his gun against Rosago's head.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Dressed in his black double-breasted suit, he stared at his enemy intently as he shot five rounds in a row, watching his enemy's head swell and explode into a mixture of red, white, and black that splattered all over the floor.

Captain, thank you for demonstrating this to me before… Klein panted while he lowered his revolver before he beamed brightly.

In front of him, Rosago's headless corpse faltered a little before collapsing to the side of the sofa.

Only then did the woman in the black Gothic regal dress stop her screams. Her struggles and rolling slowed down, but her skin seemed to turn a lot more translucent.

Seeing the flesh on Rosago's corpse squirm, Klein didn't hesitate to use his self-created Requiem Charm.

Under the calm and serene atmosphere, the corpse finally stopped moving.

Upon seeing this scene, Klein thought of something. He took out another charm and chanted in a low voice, "Crimson!"

Then, he injected some of his spirituality into it and threw this charm at his bodyguard—the woman with the pale golden hair and pale white face.

As the slumbering powers emanated, the woman who was still weakened under the effect of the lingering voices instantly quietened down as she fell into a deep slumber.

Just to be sure, Klein threw another Slumber Charm, afraid that he would be interrupted during what he was planning to do next.

15 Minsk Street once again had its peace. This time, nothing was broken; only the ground was contaminated, as the fight between the three parties was mystical and beyond the physical realm.

Looking at Rosago's corpse and then at his sleeping bodyguard, Klein mocked himself, "It's also good to court death often. At least I gained some immunity."

He didn't attempt the mediumship ritual immediately because Rosago was now tainted by the True Creator, and directly communicating with the spirit was tantamount to committing suicide.

But that didn't mean Klein had no choice. He planned on doing the mediumship above the gray fog by bringing Rosago with him!

With his current spirit body's level, even with the augmentation provided by Azik's copper whistle, he was unable to move a portable camera, much less a corpse that was several times heavier. However, mediumship wasn't done with a corpse, but the channeling of the remnant spirituality!

Klein took out a candle, quickly set up a ritual ceremony, summoned himself, and responded to himself, turning into a special spirit body.

After becoming a spirit, he saw the distinct remnants of Rosago's spirituality, and he realized that Miss Bodyguard's physical condition was a little strange. She was actually in quite a similar state as he was, but there were also great differences.

Without wasting any time thinking, Klein carried Azik's copper whistle, wrapped the remaining of Rosago's spirituality, and entered above the gray fog.

After conjuring the appropriate ritual items and setting up a simple altar, Klein quickly began the mediumship ritual.

During this process, he was shocked to discover that he no longer needed to pray to anyone to be able to directly communicate with the spirit. It was like he was a real spirit medium!

Phew… Is this some special power that I possess in the mysterious space above the gray fog? A thought flashed through Klein's mind as he began to recite the divination statement.

"The potion formulas for the Seer pathway."

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CHAPTER 251
GAINS

"The potion formulas for the Seer pathway."

…

Klein leaned back in his chair and tried to communicate with the spirit via dream divination.

In a gray illusory world that didn't seem surreal, a gas lamp suddenly lit up, illuminating the stone slabs on the ground and a desk with a goatskin scroll placed on top of it.

After the Seer and Clown formulas appeared one after the another, Rosago stood there with a fur shirt, listening to a voice of unknown origins.

"Before the advancement, I have to warn you that you've been too reliant on divination.

"Divination is a revelation, a result; it is unable to tell us the process. For example, you might decide to invest all your money because your divination says that a railway stock can make money. But in fact, what that revelation really means is that in the long run, in thirty years, the railway stock will make money, and before that, it will fall more than it rises. Fate isn't so easy to master, and there are many times when it's impossible to quantify it. Divination isn't all-powerful.

"In addition, divination can be interfered with and cause you to be misled. There are too many things in this world that cannot be understood. If you completely rely on divination, then you'll definitely die because of it.

"Divination is a revelation. It must be combined with one's own carefulness, caution, and self-control."

Rosago was unable to divine the corresponding danger because the Language of Foulness was involved with the mysterious space above the gray fog, and that led to him dying at my hands. Otherwise, with his mystical abilities, it would've been difficult for Miss Bodyguard and I to escape today… This is also a reminder for me. Even if I had the gray fog to isolate all interferences, I cannot afford to be careless. No matter how certain my actions are, I need to leave some leeway… From these words, it seems like they aren't aware of the "acting method." Otherwise, some of those words could be directly summed up as being respectful and fearful of fate… As his thoughts raced, Klein heard Rosago's reply as he unfurled the parchment.

"Sequence 7. Magician:

"Main ingredients: One true root of a Mist Treant, all the spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther."

"Supplementary ingredients: 60 ml of purified water, 30 ml of Mist Treant's juice, 3 grams of Droplet Gem powder, 4 drops of Fantasy Grass essential oil."

Magician… This is also part of a circus. It can form the foundations of a circus with Seers and Clowns… Klein first lampooned before he recalled the suited clown that he had encountered before.

From the looks of it, he was a Magician. His abilities seemed to include firing air bullets, the ability to fire air bullets, flaming jumps, and drawing slips of paper as weapons… Not bad… Just being able to cast spells quickly can greatly increase my battle prowess…

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Klein saw the scene before him change.

This time it was a splendid room, surrounded by golden statues and ornaments.

It was the same voice from before, but it reminded Rosago of the same thing.

"According to my experience, after you consume the Faceless potion, you have to remember this point—you can disguise yourself into anyone, but you are ultimately yourself.

Faceless? Sequence 6 of the Seer pathway is Faceless Man? This should be the Beyonder power that allowed Rosago to transform into Officer Faxine… From the looks of it, the fake Detective Zreal was also played by him…

Creeping Hunger allowed Qilangos to transform into a person with different looks. This matches this Beyonder power. From the looks of it, some Faceless died at his hand… Such a power cannot augment a person in a straight-up battle, but it's more useful than 90% of all Beyonder powers in many occasions… It's no wonder that Rosago dared to come and attempt to kill me, and wasn't afraid of falling into a trap… This power is of great significance to me!

At this thought, Klein's eyes widened as he saw Rosago pick up a thin gold page with words written in Hermes.

"Sequence 6, Faceless:

"Main ingredients: Mutated pituitary gland of a Thousand-faced Hunter, Characteristic of a Human-skinned Shadow.

"Supplementary ingredients: 80 ml of a Thousand-faced Hunter's blood, 5 drops of black Jimsonweed juice, 10 grams of Dragon Tooth Grass powder, 3 strands of hair from a Deep-sea Naga."

Thousand-faced Hunter? That seems to be a type of dragon, but not a particularly powerful kind… It shouldn't be a dragon of the spiritual system, but it's still extremely rare. It's almost extinct… Klein instantly recalled the corresponding mysticism knowledge.

At this point, the scene before him didn't change, but Rosago's attire and location did.

He wore a white wig, a dark tuxedo, and had a thick beard.

"This advancement is no longer as simple as before. The potions must be consumed in conjunction with a ritual. If you succeed, you'll obtain one of the most irresistible Beyonder powers beneath that of the High-Sequence Beyonders." The speaker's voice had changed, turning into one that sounded even older.

Having expected that, Rosago asked, "What's the ritual?"

"Go to the sea, find a mermaid, and drink the potion while she's singing." The speaking old man opened an ancient book that depicted countless mysterious symbols in it.

Suddenly, a ray of light flashed from the book's surface as lines of ancient Hermes appeared in midair.

"Sequence 5: Nimblewright Master."

When Klein saw this, he suddenly had a headache. It was a signal that his spirituality was closed to being drained.

In the previous battle, just the Language of Foulness charm, alone, had consumed most of his spirituality. Later on, not only did he use three more charms from the Evernight Goddess's domain, but he had also summoned himself and responded to himself. To hold out until now showed how much progress he had made compared to before, as well as the noticeable improvement in the digestion of the Clown potion.

The scene flickered and was on the brink of shattering. Klein held on and scanned the remaining content of the formula.

"Main ingredients: Dust of ancient wraiths, core crystal of a six-winged gargoyle.

"Supplementary ingredients: 80 ml of spring water from Sonia Island's Golden Spring, 10 grams of drago bark, remnant spirituality of ancient wraiths, 1 pair of eyes from a six-winged gargoyle.

"Advancement ritual: Consume potion in the midst of a singing mermaid's song."

Kacha. Klein stopped holding out any longer as he allowed the dream to shatter into countless illusory specks of light that disappeared.

He pinched his forehead, almost fainting. As the remnants of Rosago's spirituality and the hints of madness faded away, he was pushed back into the real world by an invisible force.

The ground, stained with blood, brains, hair, and all sorts of fragments, entered Klein's vision. He bent over and retched a little, clearing his head a little.

I'll be sent out of the mysterious space above the gray fog when I'm out of spirituality… Klein looked around and saw that Miss Bodyguard was still asleep.

He hurriedly extinguished the candle, tidied up the items related to the ritual, and then panted heavily. After a while, he finally regained some of his spirituality.

At that moment, a gust of cold wind blew at the back of his neck, causing him to shiver as his mind froze.

Klein turned his head abruptly and looked at the oriel window again. He saw that Miss Bodyguard in her black Gothic regal dress had woken up and was floating in the air.

Her pale blonde hair and pale face seemed to have diminished a little. Her entire person seemed less corporeal, to the point of her skin appearing somewhat transparent.

Klein quickly explained according to the explanation he had thought of.

"After I blew his head off, I discovered that his body was still squirming. Because I was afraid he would come back alive, I quickly used all the charms on me. I-I was very nervous and panicked at the time. It might have affected you."

This is probably the risk that the divination had revealed earlier… If she's not satisfied with the explanation and thinks that I attacked her, then I'm finished… Klein thought nervously.

His true feelings made his performance even more perfect.

Miss Bodyguard lowered her head and looked at herself, then asked with an unperturbed tone, "What charm was it at the beginning?"

"I bought a black ear at the gathering for 400 pounds. I was told that I could hear the voice of a great existence, and that if I was lucky enough, I would benefit greatly. If I was unlucky, I would die on the spot. Back then, I couldn't get a bodyguard, and since I was in such danger, I could only take the gamble. The result was pretty good," Klein replied absolutely truthfully. "When I heard the voice of the great existence, that black ear shattered by itself and turned into such a charm."

Miss Bodyguard's blue eyes swept over him slowly. The room was silent, as if it was frozen.

Finally, the lady in the black regal dress nodded.

"You'd better find a psychiatrist."

Do you mean that I've become a potential lunatic? Yes, she has guessed that it was a relic of a Listener, and she understands that Rosago's spirituality must've been tainted by the True Creator. She wouldn't suspect that I had deliberately made her sleep to take that opportunity to perform a mediumship… It would also explain why I had gotten rid of the effects of the ravings faster than she did. After all, I'm a potential lunatic created by the True Creator… Klein smirked.

"Let's hurry up and clean up the scene. MI9 might come over to take a look." He pointed at Rosago's headless body.

As he spoke, Klein put on a pair of gloves and squatted down to look for any relics.

He quickly found more than ten pounds in cash, some essential oils and herbal powder, two crudely cut paper figurines, and a strange piece of paper.

This piece of paper was orange in color, and on it were symbols corresponding to the sun. The magic emblem formed a blank rectangle, and just by holding it in his hand, he found it very warm and sedate.

"What is this?" Klein didn't hide his puzzlement.

Without him realizing it, Miss Bodyguard was already floating behind him. She answered simply, "A mystical object corresponding to a Notary."

"Notary?" Klein was surprised at first, but he soon remembered that Rosago was an intelligence officer in the Intis Republic. People there believed in the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery. Similarly, the Eternal Blazing Sun was also the God of Deeds.

This is the Sequence 6 or Sequence 5 of the Bard pathway?

"If the notarization is valid, the Beyonder powers will be temporarily enhanced. If the notarization is fake, the Beyonder powers will be forcefully dispersed." Miss Bodyguard didn't explain any further and gave a rough description of its use.

Klein was about to say something when he saw an eerie glow emitting out of Rosago's headless body and bloody brain mush. They attracted each other to form a blob that transformed into a black, pupil-less eye.

"Then, what is this?" Klein asked again, feigning ignorance.

"Something worthless." Miss Bodyguard maintained her way of speaking.

"Worthless?" Klein asked with a frown.

He actually understood what Miss Bodyguard meant. Normally, if Rosago eventually lost control, he would leave behind a strange and terrifying Sealed Artifact. If he didn't, his Beyonder characteristic could be used as the main ingredient of a Nimblewright Master. In short, it would be of great value.

However, the problem was that he hadn't lost control but was also tainted by the True Creator. Hence, it had become a potion's main ingredient that was branded by an evil god. Using it to concoct a Nimblewright Master potion was equivalent to committing suicide by ingesting poison.

Miss Bodyguard looked at the entirely black eye and said in a low and ethereal voice.

"It has been contaminated by an evil god. It has no value anymore."

If it really is of value, and one that's very valuable, I would even worry that you'd finish me off in passing… Klein pointed at Rosago's remains and said, "These are our common spoils of war. We'll each pick a few. You first."

Miss Bodyguard shot him a glance. Without a word, she floated over and took the "notary document."

Just like I thought… In the future, I should find and learn the knowledge in mysticism to remove an evil god's contamination… Klein took out an iron cigarette case and bent down to pick up the black eye.

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CHAPTER 252
EPILOGUE

As soon as Klein's fingers touched the black eye, he heard illusory sounds as a throbbing pain seared through his head.

But, at the same time, something strange appeared in his vision.

These were countless illusory black threads that spread out from Miss Bodyguard and his own body. They emanated from their bodies, out into the void towards some boundless distance.

This was a scene that would horrify people with trypophobia.

Klein suddenly gritted his teeth, unable to endure the corruptive feeling any longer as he placed the black eye into the iron cigarette case.

Everything restored to normal, and the negative side effects he suffered subsided.

Only then did Klein have the energy to make guesses.

Is that the essence of a Nimblewright Master's Beyonder powers?

It allows one to see and control certain threads connecting every person's body and spirit?

What a pity that it's contaminated. The side effects are too great, and it cannot be used as a mystical item…

For now, disregarding an attempt to purify it above the gray fog, this will be considered the second time that I'm provoking the True Creator, so it is very likely that "He" would prepare "Himself" and seek me out… If that happened, I probably wouldn't have a chance of reviving again… I should learn and master the relevant knowledge before making a decision…

Phew. He exhaled, and after Miss Bodyguard chose the crude paper figurines and the corresponding materials, he bent down again to pick up the 13 pounds 5 soli and 8 pence.

Then, looking at Rosago's headless body and the blood all over the floor, he said, with a slight headache, "Let's clean up the scene."

The pale blonde Miss Bodyguard floated to the side and calmly said, "Let me do it."

*You? *Klein stopped, puzzled and shocked, before turning his head.

Miss Bodyguard floated to Rosago's side, crouched down, and went to lie down over the body.

She slowly sank in and fused with the corpse!

The fingers of Rosago's body twitched twice, and the blood, brain matter, and fragments around it flowed backward, forming a new head at the neck.

However, the head was covered with countless cracks, just like a disgusting toy made from tiny fragments.

It was like glass that had been shattered but didn't crumble immediately. There was still blood and brain matter flowing inside it, as well as the reflection of the bullet from the revolver.

Klein couldn't help but take a step back, feeling that this was definitely one of the most terrifying forms in any ghost story.

Rosago's corpse climbed to its feet, picked up the police cap, and half covered its face. The murder scene had been cleaned, leaving zero traces.

Incomparable professionalism! Klein marveled in his heart.

He watched as Miss Bodyguard steered the corpse to lumber to the door. He subconsciously warned her, "Don't take a carriage or walk in brightly-lit places."

It would frighten the carriage driver and other passers-by!

Miss Bodyguard didn't stop, completely ignoring his words.

Suddenly, Klein thought of something. He realized what he had overlooked as he quickly added, "On the way back, go to the Rice police station, Sergeant Faxine's home, or search around Minsk Street for the clothes Rosago was originally wearing."

*Rosago came wearing a police uniform, and the powers of a Faceless were obviously limited to himself, so where were his previous clothes? He couldn't have been wearing a police uniform all night! If MI9 and the police found Rosago's clothes nearby and realized that I'm not hurt, things would be a little tricky… Miss Bodyguard is an expert that's not considered a legal Beyonder. For a normal detective to pay 1000 pounds to hire a bodyguard is enough to arouse suspicion… *Klein kept thinking, trying to seal all the loopholes ahead of time.

Just as he was about to use his divination ability to help Miss Bodyguard find Rosago's old clothes and return the missing uniform, Rosago's corpse paused and replied in a rusty voice, "I know."

Eh, she seems very confident… Oh right, Miss Bodyguard's state is between the physical body and the spirit body, and the principle behind divination is to travel the spirit world with an Astral Projection… Thus, she can rely on her instincts to divine… Having realized this, Klein didn't say another word.

He handed the cartridge case to Rosago's corpse and watched it open the door, walk out, and close the door politely.

The spoil of war that I chose is a Beyonder characteristic contaminated by the True Creator. I believe that no one would be able to divine it. Even if they did, they would feel the danger ahead of time and wouldn't dare to proceed with the divination… While thinking over the matter, Klein walked back to the sofa and sat down, feeling a lingering sense of fear.

The battle had lasted no more than a minute, nor had it been fierce enough to destroy anything, but the ferocity and danger of it had been second only to what he had experienced when facing Megose and the baby in her womb.

Even with the powerful Miss Bodyguard and the Language of Foulness, he had almost fallen under Rosago's control and killed without being able to put up a resistance.

The ability of a Nimblewright Master is very odd and very powerful! According to the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation, the Beyonder characteristic left behind by Rosago should include all of the main ingredients of the potions Sequences 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. If it wasn't contaminated by an evil god, if it was matched with the supplementary ingredients, an ordinary person could instantly become a Sequence 5 Beyonder. Of course, this kind of advancement method—one depending entirely on luck—has long been abandoned by history. It's the most primitive and most dangerous method…

Advancing step by step according to the Sequence is the best way that has been verified by the lives of countless predecessors… If I can get rid of the corruption of the True Creator in the future, then I can also use the Beyonder characteristic left behind by Rosago when advancing from Sequence 6 to Sequence 5. The additional characteristics will only make me stronger, like the Captain…

As Klein recalled the past, he raised his hand to pinch his forehead. He turned to think about something more important.

Rosago's appearance meant that the struggle for the manuscript had ended… Could his lack of charms have to do with him finishing all his charms in the battle? To come at such a critical juncture, it's likely he had the intention of diverting attention… Heh, MI9 probably didn't expect him to seek revenge so boldly under such circumstances. They didn't send anyone to monitor me and could only passively wait for Rosago to give them the "signal"…

Rosago was Bakerland's assistant, and his actions should be directed only by Bakerland. After his death, as long as Bakerland is dead, there would be no more latent dangers left… I wonder if the assassination has begun or if it succeeded…

Hmm… Tonight, because of the battle over Helmosuin's manuscript, the powers defending Bakerland would be at its weakest. If it were me, I'd definitely not miss this opportunity. I'm sure Bakerland didn't think that someone would assassinate him!

With nothing to do, Klein fished out a coin and, with recited with a suppressed tone, "Bakerland is already dead."

…

Ding!

The penny tumbled in the air and fell down into the palm of Klein's hand, head facing up.

It meant a positive result!

Bakerland is dead? The assassination was a success? Klein was overjoyed, his tensed up nerves immediately relaxed.

Without Rosago's interference, he believed that the result was correct!

This matter has finally ended… Klein took a deep breath and slowly exhaled.

He leaned back slowly on the sofa and looked out of the window at the faint crimson moon amid his fatigue and relief.

…

Inside the Intis Republic's embassy, two military officials were squatting beside Bakerland's body, examining the cause of his death.

Their partners and their superior had already gone out, chasing in a bid to capture the assassin. However, everyone knew that it was already too late. There was no hope left.

"There's severe lung damage, suspected to be the result of a disease… An extremely strong fatal blow, one much stronger than all the Sequence 5 Beyonder attacks I've ever seen…" one of the military officials said in a low voice.

"Disease? On the floor and on the bed, there are obvious marks of flesh and blood magic on the ground and on the bed, but none on the wall. Besides, the commotion of the fight wasn't transmitted outside. Finally, with the lethal blow having the characteristics of corruption and obliteration, there are at least four unconnected Beyonder powers…" Another military official stood up and began to describe the situation as if he was talking to himself.

He suddenly stopped and looked at the other military official. They said in unison, "Shepherd!"

After a few seconds of silence, the squatting military official frowned and said, "It might be a group with at least four different Beyonders…"

"Then, we'll wait to be judged! It's normal for us not to discover the infiltration of a single Rose Bishop, but how did the other three do it? It's impossible!" The standing military official denied the guess as he hesitantly

said, "However, I have heard of another Sequence that can create similar effects. I-I think it's called Scribe. I don't know what pathway it is, nor do I know which organization it belongs."

The squatting military official nodded and said, "A Shepherd is the prime suspect. The Aurora Order are a bunch of lunatics. It's nothing odd for them to do anything! Let's begin investigating the identity of the woman that seduced the ambassador. Damn it. The Loen Kingdom definitely won't permit our investigations!"

"Those Aurora Order bastards are lunatics who deserve to be f*cked by donkeys!" The standing military official shook his head in frustration.

They were bound to be punished for the ambassador's assassination.

…

At 15 Minsk Street, Klein pretended as though nothing had happened. Putting up with his fatigue, he flipped through the papers.

After about twenty minutes, he suddenly saw Miss Bodyguard, in her black regal dress and long, pale blonde hair, appear in the oriel window.

"Is it done?" Klein subconsciously asked.

Miss Bodyguard nodded slightly without a word.

Phew… Klein thought for a moment before saying, "Thank you for your protection. This matter ends here.

"I'll pay you the remaining 900 pounds in two days. As you know, there's a withdrawal limit.

"Or should I hand it over to Maric?"

The pale-faced lady opened and closed her mouth, her voice seemingly ethereal as it echoed in the air.

"Just give it to me.

"I promised to protect you for three days, not just once."

Lady, you really abide by the contract… However, this would be very inconvenient for me… Are you going with me to catch the adulterers in bed tomorrow? Three days. Today is Thursday, and the protection would be over by Sunday afternoon. Yes, thankfully, it wouldn't affect the Tarot Gathering… Klein rubbed his forehead and said, "Alright. How should I address you?"

"You don't need to know." Miss Bodyguard lifted her gothic regal dress, bowed slightly, and disappeared from the oriel window.

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CHAPTER 253
NIGHT THOUGHTS

She really has… quite the character! Klein smiled in response to Miss Bodyguard's reply—a very obvious smile.

Yes, to be able to fend off Rosago, a Nimblewright Master, for a short period of time to the extent of having a seesaw battle; she's most likely a Sequence 5 Beyonder. I wonder what Sequence pathway she belongs to and what her potion name is. Her state is rather unique… If it weren't for her, I wouldn't have even had the chance to use the Language of Foulness… Klein picked up the newspaper beside him and pretended to read, but he was actually thinking.

However, he quickly turned his attention back to the issue of whether there were still loopholes on the matter. For example, the contaminated Beyonder characteristic left behind by Rosago had an intense luster of spirituality. It was very likely that it couldn't be concealed by the iron cigarette case alone, so it would be exposed under the prying eyes of others using Spirit Vision.

Klein secretly activated his Spirit Vision and looked down at his pocket. He could see faint colorful lusters emanating from within the iron cigarette case, but it wasn't obvious and was rather thin.

This was mixed with the color of his own aura, making it difficult to distinguish or detect it.

That's right. Only a High-Sequence Beyonder can identify it through two levels of interference… No wonder all kinds of materials like herbal powders and the corresponding essential oil extracts are kept in metal bottles and not wooden vessels. It's because they contain spirituality, and

those with better Spirit Vision can see through wood and see the color of the auras… Klein suddenly understood some of the important details in mysticism.

In the past, he did things according to the rules without considering the reasons behind them, but now, he understood the underlying reason behind the rules.

After repeatedly checking and ensuring that everything was in order, Klein put down the newspapers and walked to the second floor.

He had originally planned to take off his clothes and take a bath to completely relax himself, but when he thought of how Miss Bodyguard could appear out of nowhere in his house, he felt a little uneasy. Therefore, he only washed his face, brushed his teeth, and soaked his feet in hot water.

Returning to his bedroom and taking off his coat, Klein hid his belongings before he collapsed onto the bed. As he was exhausted and had held on for quite a while, he ended up with tense nerves that prevented him from quickly falling asleep.

Opening his eyes to look at the crimson moonlight on the ceiling, Klein didn't attempt to sleep with the help of Cogitation. Instead, he aimlessly unfurled his thoughts, as if he were riding a horse without pulling at the reins.

As his thoughts wandered, he quickly noticed a problem having encountered too many coincidences in Tingen City and later learning how it was related to Sealed Artifact 0-08.

My second case after arriving at Backlund allowed me to get the next three potions formulas. Is that too much of a coincidence?

Although this is in line with the revelation from my divination—"Backlund contains the opportunities for me to become powerful." Isn't it too fast and simple?

Simple doesn't refer to the difficulty, but rather to the degree of twists and turns in the matter. This matter was very difficult and dangerous, but it wasn't complex and appeared simple.

According to my expectations, I would've gathered information regarding the Secret Order through Miss Justice, Mr. Hanged Man, and Miss Xio and her companion, and then I would catch the tail of this ancient organization. After numerous twists and turns, I would eventually obtain the formulas and that would have taken at least three months. Who knew that I would've succeeded in less than three weeks…

It can't be that it was arranged by someone again, right?

Yes… Let me think through the circumstances again. It's no coincidence that the Intis Republic is related to the Secret Order. Emperor Roselle's diary has confirmed this circumstantially.

The abilities of the Seer and Faceless are very suited for an intelligence organization. For a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of a similar pathway to become the assistant of an intelligence tsar like Bakerland is reasonable and normal. That's not a coincidence.

The reason that the ambassador sent someone to take revenge on me likely has to do with him wanting to divert attention. Then, sending Rosago, who can most easily succeed and escape, is a choice with reduced risk. That's not surprising at all.

It was quite normal for Ian to look for new detectives in the papers after none of the detectives he knew were willing to accept his mission of tracking down Zreal. There weren't many new detectives advertising on the papers at the time, and I was probably the only one. Well, I was the only one on the Backlund Bulletin…

Just like what I've concluded previously, the problem with Meursault was that he was too rash, and I was worried that it's not easy to disguise myself usually as it can end up attracting more attention. Therefore, I didn't try to

disguise myself. Although these two possibilities, especially the former, has the probability of being influenced, it does match the corresponding person's personality, mentality, and origins.

And this isn't the main point. This doesn't explain the problem of how my second case ended up involving a Mid-Sequence Beyonder of the Seer pathway.

It was destined by fate? That doesn't feel right.

Thinking ahead, after I transmigrated, the first and second case I found myself embroiled in was related to the Seer pathway. Of course, it could be explained as an arrangement by 0-08.

Right, the Antigonus family's notebook even corrupted the Misfortune Cloth Puppet and showed me the complicated vertical eye symbol that involves the Antigonus family's treasure. The reason I came up with back then was that with the termination of the Antigonus family's bloodline, it viewed me, a Seer who had survived despite having interacted with it, as its inheritor.

Now that I think about it, this reason is extremely trifling. What if I'm a devout believer of the Evernight Goddess? However, I only made a guess at that time and didn't confirm it.

The Antigonus family's treasure is obviously related to the Seer pathway.

Thinking deeper, why did I transmigrate? Why did I happen to possess Klein's body, and not anyone else… Back then, Klein had just proceeded with dark divination and was made to commit suicide by the Antigonus family's notebook. And that notebook is clearly related to the Seer pathway.

In addition, the first time I saw Roselle's diary, it had content that involved his regret of not choosing Apprentice, Marauder, or Seer. That was very coincidental.

From beginning to end, except for those parts involving 0-08, everything appeared to be in a mess. It doesn't seem like a conscious arrangement, but more like a kind of passive attraction, a mutual attraction, an attraction that has breaks between them.

I attract things and items regarding the Seer pathway, and at the same time, I'm attracted to them?

It does seem odd thinking about it. This kind of attraction even directly influences fate, preventing even Mr. Azik from seeing through it?

Is there some strange characteristic to me?

And this characteristic allows me to resurrect a limited number of times?

With this in mind, Klein suddenly had the impulse to go above the gray fog to perform a divination and confirm his ideas.

But he quickly rejected this idea, not only because Miss Bodyguard might be watching in the mirror, but also because he believed that his greatest characteristic was the mysterious space above the gray fog!

Therefore, it was obviously impossible for him to have an answer if he were to use it to divine about it.

At least for now, there aren't any obvious signs of manipulation. It would be acceptable if it's just pure attraction… And I've already chosen a Beyonder pathway, that cannot be changed until Sequence 4, so I can only take things one step at a time… Right, I should be firm about not heading to the Hornacis mountain range to seek out the Antigonus family's treasure… Heh heh, I have a feeling that I would say how nice it is in the future when I actually do it… Klein silently made a self-deprecating remark as he felt his exhaustion gradually wash over him. His eyelids couldn't help but close.

The last thought before he fell asleep was:

I should participate in more Beyonder gatherings and gather the corresponding Beyonder ingredients for Magician through Miss Justice, Mr. Hanged Man, and The Sun. I wouldn't reject anything for Faceless if they were available. In addition, I should obtain mystical items that have less severe negative effects. Before my digestion and increase in strength, it's best to have more life-preservation abilities… Apart from this, investing, taking on jobs, saving up money, and attempts to look for Lanevus to use him as the starting point for my revenge, can also be considered a form of practice…

Those were Klein's future plans.

At seven in the morning, he woke up as usual. It was still gloomy and hazy outside.

Klein got up and walked to the door. As he passed by the full-length mirror, he saw that Miss Bodyguard had suddenly appeared.

She wore the same black bonnet, her face was as pale as ever. Her voice pierced through the glass and slipped into Klein's ear in an ethereal fashion.

"Someone from MI9 came last night."

Eh… I should say as expected, the "police" came late, but I still have to thank them for being late… Klein smiled and asked, "They didn't find anything, right?"

In regards to the answer, he was very certain that if MI9 had discovered something, he wouldn't have been able to sleep undisturbed.

"No." Miss Bodyguard's figure faded and disappeared into the mirror.

This ability of hers is very powerful… Even Spirit Vision can't detect her… Perhaps, she can be seen with Rosago's Beyonder characteristic? Find Miss Bodyguard through those hidden threads? Klein's mind stirred as he

returned to the bed and took out the iron cigarette case from under his pillow.

Just as he touched it, before he could even open it, a bone-piercing cold rushed at his neck. He felt his hairs stand on end, and his entire body trembled.

Pow!

His hand loosened and the iron cigarette case fell to the ground.

This is a warning from Miss Bodyguard… Klein laughed dryly, pretending as though nothing had happened as he stuffed the iron cigarette case into his pocket.

After washing up and putting on his clothes, he arrived at the first floor and took out the newspapers that he had subscribed to from his letterbox.

Flipping open the Tussock Times, Klein saw the headline:

"Intis Ambassador to Backlund murdered! Terrorist organization, the Aurora Order, claims responsibility!"

The result is out so quickly? Besides, the Aurora Order had only accepted a job, so why would they claim responsibility? Yes… A terrorist organization needs to show off their stature and build up their image. Only then would they be able to attract enough fresh blood. This complements their secret preachings… Mr. A is very good. He should be a Shepherd. Klein stood in the hallway, reading the news.

According to the news, there was evidence of the Aurora Order's assault on Ambassador Bakerland. In the follow-up investigation, they found a letter deliberately left behind by the Aurora Order which claimed responsibility for it.

At the end of the news, the reporter briefly introduced the Aurora Order and listed some of the illegal crimes that they had committed. Their fame instantly surpassed most of the secret organizations.

Regardless, this matter had come to an end… Klein exhaled, turned his head to look out the window, and he saw a thin mist filling the air as a drizzle began pattering down.

Shouldn't there be bright sunshine and sunny weather during such moments? Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh.

And now, he had to go out to catch some adulterers.

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CHAPTER 254
VARIOUS PARTIES

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Count Hall.

Audrey, with a white napkin covering her, watched as the dining maidservant cut her a piece of bacon, laid out two fully-fried eggs, spread fruit jam on a piece of soft bread, and added sauce to some grilled mushrooms.

In a true noble family, maidservants were divided into many categories. Apart from personal maids, there were maids for the different bedrooms, study room maids, activity room maids, guest room maids, dressing maids, shoe maids, jewelry maids, dining maids, laundry maids, and kitchen maids. They were strictly assigned to their own tasks, with one task handled by one maid.

Although this was a great waste of manpower, for nobles, propriety was everything. Unless there was a large amount of debt, they would never reduce their requirements in such matters.

Audrey took a sip of the brownish-red tea, allowing the faint scent of malt and rose slush in her mouth.

At this moment, she heard her father, a Member of Parliament of the House of Lords, the powerful banker, Count Hall, mumbling as he held a newspaper in his hands.

"The Aurora Order is really crazy."

*Aurora Order? *Audrey blinked and asked curiously, "What did they do?"

"Oh, baby, you don't want to know. They assassinated the Intis Ambassador, Bakerland. It does them no good." Count Hall shook his head as he flipped through the newspaper.

Audrey's elder brother, the count's eldest son, Hibbert Hall swallowed the grilled mushrooms in his mouth and expressed his opinion.

"Perhaps they want to destroy the relationship between the kingdom and Intis and let the war spread from the colonies to the Northern Continent."

This child of noble birth had a handsome face and bright golden hair. He looked like a classical sculpture, regardless of which angle one viewed him from.

"No, if that was the case, then they wouldn't leave behind so much obvious evidence. Moreover, recently, the kingdom has too many new policies that will be implemented and will need some time to stabilize the environment, so we won't rashly start a war. What happened last night was already reported in the newspaper this morning, and the details of the events and the murderer are enough to explain the thoughts of His Majesty and the ministers." Count Hall directed his son.

Audrey listened to her father and brother discuss the matter in a daze before realizing what had happened.

Bakerland has been assassinated?

Mr. A succeeded?

He really is from the Aurora Order?

The reason why he intentionally exposed that it was the Aurora Order who did it was to prove that he was the one who completed the task and that he hadn't cheated me out of my money?

This is too fast and efficient. I only paid the first sum yesterday afternoon, and I'm hearing the result this morning. A good result!

Audrey was astonished and delighted. It was an uncontrollable joy, but also an instinctive fear.

It was definitely something to be happy about since the mission entrusted by Mr. Fool's adorer had been accomplished so easily. However, the power and actions displayed by Mr. A and the Aurora Order who was backing him left Audrey subconsciously scared.

Thankfully, I talked with Glaint yesterday and reached a loan agreement. As a viscount, he should've successfully raised the money without drawing attention to himself… I'll give Mr. A the remaining funds in the coming two days through Xio and Fors. I can't afford to show my face… I won't be attending Mr. A's gathering for the next month or two. It's good that I already have other circles… Audrey took a reserved bite of the soft bread which was slathered with jam.

As breakfast drew to a close, small cakes of cream, cherries, and strawberries were served to her plate, and she suddenly felt a little smug as she calmed down.

Mr. Hanged Man wanted to take part in the mission, but he might've only just now completed his initial assignment… but it's already over. Serves him right to be at sea~ Audrey was in a good mood, and she was smiling as she savored the dessert.

…

At Hillston Borough, Xio and Fors looked at the newspaper in front of them and made no further movements for a long time.

“…This was done by Mr. A, wasn't it?" Xio looked at her friend with a shocked and puzzled look.

Fors turned the stone bracelet on her wrist and shook her head in a daze.

"Perhaps."

"I know about the Aurora Order, but I don't know if Mr. A is a member of the Aurora Order."

"He should be. After all, we only gave him 2,000 pounds yesterday. I doubt anyone else would also want to assassinate Ambassador Bakerland…" Xio said with uncertainty.

Fors was silent for a few seconds before she suddenly sighed and said, "Whether it was Mr. A or not, we still have to give him the remaining 8000 pounds. At the moment, no one can prove that he didn't do it. If we want to stay in this circle, we can't renege on the debt!"

"Anyway, we're not the ones paying… And we'll still get 500 pounds for the work!" With that, Xio became happy.

"The thing is, I always have a feeling that finding Mr. A again would be dangerous…" Fors pondered and said, "I'll go by myself to make the last payment. It'll be better for the both of us."

"But…" Xio was a little worried.

"If you follow me, it'll affect my escape," Fors shook the bracelet on her wrist and said in a disdainful tone.

"Alright then," Xio scratched her short, rough blond hair as she helplessly replied.

While the two of them were fretting about this, a new message from Mr. A came to them from a private communication channel. He told them not to look for him, but to deposit the rest of the money in separate anonymous accounts at different banks.

Phew… Xio and Fors breathed a sigh of relief in unison.

…

In a basement that was as wide as a temple, Mr. A, wearing a hooded black robe, was kneeling in the darkness, murmuring something reverently.

In front of him was a three-meter statue of a man hanging upside down with his legs chained up.

This hanged man had a giant's unique single vertical eye, and his arms were stretched out horizontally, forming a cross.

At this moment, a man with a black robe came in and humbly reported, "Mr. A, I've already sent the news."

"Well done," Mr. A said, without turning his head.

The man in the black robe asked curiously, "Why don't you let us investigate who commissioned this mission?"

Mr. A lowered his head and said with an indifferent tone, "There's no need.

"You must remember that this is a critical moment.

"We will cause chaos throughout the continent, try our best to attract the attention of others, and use these to welcome the return of our Lord!

"Hahaha. Cough! Cough! Cough…”

Mr. A suddenly laughed before he started having a fit of coughing. It was so serious that he fell to the ground.

"Cough! Cough!"

He coughed out blood-colored fragments which continued squirming after falling to the ground as if they were alive.

The man in the black robe immediately lowered his head, pretending as though he had seen nothing.

After quite some time, Mr. A finally calmed down.

He crawled forward, his mouth pressed against the ground as he licked all the blood-colored fragments that he had coughed out back into his mouth.

…

126 New Year's Street, Hillston Borough.

The relaxed Klein didn't tail Doragu Gale this time. Instead, he chose his mistress, Erica Taylor. After all, adultery needed two to clap.

The pretty blonde, with the intricate makeup, arrived early at the Quelaag Club via a rental carriage. Klein, who carried a suitcase containing a portable camera and all sorts of disguises, followed her in.

"Are there any more rooms to rest in?" Wearing the club's Frost badge on his chest, he asked the elegant maid responsible for receiving guests today.

The maid wearing a black-and-white dress politely smiled.

"Yes, please follow the attendant upstairs."

Klein nodded slightly. He followed the red-vested attendant up the stairs and arrived at the second floor, just in time to see Erica Taylor enter a lounge that faced the streets.

"Do you want to see the passers-by on the street or the tennis court out back?" The red-vested attendant asked politely.

"Let's do the street," Klein answered casually in a deliberate manner.

Under the arrangements of the red-vested attendant, he and Erica Taylor's room was separated by two rooms, and he could also see the street outside the club.

How do I take a picture later? Should I find a chance to sneak in and hide in the room, or climb out of the window and travel across the pipes? Neither of these methods can conceal that exaggerated flash, but the latter can be disguised as a vogue shot from the outside. That wouldn't bring suspicion to me and I wouldn't be kicked out… However, this will be easily noticed by Doragu and Erica… Use a charm to put them to sleep? No, it wouldn't be convincing enough; it has to be a picture of them doing the deed…

There's only one chance, and I have to take it well enough… This isn't my field of expertise, as I'm not some artistic master. If it was Old Neil, he would definitely attempt to conjure a new ritualistic magic to hide the camera flash. Of course, the Goddess might not respond to his request…

As Klein considered his next move, he saw the image of Miss Bodyguard appear in a silver mirror in the room.

She was still wearing her black Gothic regal dress and her matching soft hat. Her hair was pale blonde in color with delicate features across her pale face.

"Do you have any way of hiding the flash of the camera?" Klein asked casually.

Before he could finish his sentence, he saw ripples on the surface of the silver mirror as a slightly transparent palm suddenly extended.

Miss Bodyguard came out of the silver mirror like a ghost, walked in front of Klein, and said with a nod, "Yes."

She lowered her body and leaned over, slowly fusing into the camera's lens!

Klein's mouth slightly opened as he watched this horrifying scene, taking quite a while to recover from his shock. He picked up his portable camera and tried a test shot in his lounge.

The effect was beyond his expectations. The flash was limited to the vicinity of the camera, and the resulting image was also quite good.

*Perhaps it should now be called a Spectral Camera… *Klein lampooned. He took the camera, went to the window, and patiently waited.

Not long after, he saw Doragu Gale arrive via carriage.

In the other room, Erica Taylor saw her lover and hastily left the lounge to meet him on the first floor.

Klein seized the opportunity to use a tarot card to open her room, carefully hiding in the cupboard where the extra sheets and quilts were kept.

The darkness around him reminded him of the previous night, of that creepy and terrifying Numblewright Master, Rosago.

Last night was filled with danger, yet today, here I am catching adulterers in the act. Life sure is marvelous… While Klein was making fun of himself, he heard the door open.

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CHAPTER 255
PHOTOGRAPHY EXPERT

Huddled in the cupboard, Klein secretly activated his Spirit Vision and saw two interfering auras enter.

"Erica, I brought you a present," A deep voice sounded as the door closed.

*As expected, he's a gentleman of the Loen Kingdom. Even in an affair, he seems a little old-fashioned. If it was a man from Intis, he would definitely be shouting "sweetheart,""baby,""angel," and the like… *Klein couldn't help but lampoon.

Of course, this was based on the stereotypes from newspapers, magazines, and novels.

Erica Taylor asked in surprise, "Let me guess… Is it Fassman Eye Cream, Face Cream, or Essence? Or Leshini's?"

What the heck are all those… Klein was stunned by what he heard.

It was clear that Doragu Gale wasn't able to react in time either. It took him about eight seconds before he said, "…No, stockings."

In this world, since oil hasn't been discovered, there were no corresponding cheap chemical products; therefore, silk stockings were considered high-class items.

"Not bad, let me take a look." Erica's joy didn't diminish.

"I bought them yesterday at Phillip's. One pair for thirty soli, a total of five pairs," Doragu said in a flaunting tone.

"How expensive."

That's expensive!

Erica and Klein both said the same thing, one exclaiming, the other secretly sighing.

*Benson has worked for so many years, earning only 1 pound 10 soli a week, which is 30 soli. That's just equivalent to a pair of stockings, and with that salary, he was able to provide his brother and sister with an education, feed them fairly well, and even provided them with a place to sleep… An average worker with a bit of skill would only be paid around 20 soli a week… *Klein's clicked his tongue.

"No, it's not expensive. Silk stockings are worth that much. I even gave an extra tip of five soli." As he spoke, the color of his aura turned more vivid, and Klein guessed that he had taken off his coat.

"Then I'll give it a try," Erica Taylor softly said in a suggestive manner.

I feel like I'm watching a porno again… And it's even a live broadcast… Besides, Miss Bodyguard is also here… The corner of Klein's mouth twitched as he watched red colors flowing across red colors, signifying the passion between the two was igniting like fire.

*The purple color is almost red and isn't stopping… Red wrapped around green, orange… *While listening to the wheezing and the low laughter, Klein judged the movements and positions of the couple outside by the change in the color of their auras.

Feeling that this was enough, Klein silently pushed open the cupboard door and looked in the direction of the bed.

Doragu and Erica were already entangled, their clothes half undone, their movements intense.

Klein lifted the Spectral Camera and aimed it at the passionate couple, waiting to see their faces at the same time.

As Doragu and Erica fell back onto the bed, Klein finally captured the most appropriate frame and pressed the shutter button.

The click of the camera wasn't distinct, and the intense flash and other abnormalities were limited to a very small area, so the couple wasn't alarmed.

With no confidence in his photography skills, Klein added a few more shots, intending to have options to choose from later.

He was only planning on handing his employer a single picture because too many photos would make the lawyer suspect why the couple didn't notice him taking the picture.

A piece of underwear landed lightly on the floor, and the sound of breathing intensified as Klein grabbed his portable camera and adeptly rolled out of the cupboard, closing the door behind him.

He rolled on the floor until he reached the lounge's door. Then, he quietly pulled it open and returned to the corridor.

Done! With a sigh of relief, Klein politely closed the door in silence, pressed his hand to his chest, and bowed in the direction of the bed.

Without further ado, he returned to his lounge.

The last 7 pounds will soon be obtained… And I also earned an additional Quelaag Club membership worth 50 pounds. It covers board, lodging, and entertainment… That's worth even more than 50 pounds. Without any connections or contacts, I wouldn't have been able to join this—even with a

hundred pounds… This mission isn't bad at all. It's simple, safe, and profitable.… Klein put down his portable camera and sighed with emotion in his heart.

At that moment, a hand suddenly stretched out from the camera lens.

Miss Bodyguard in her black regal dress slowly came out and floated in midair again, but her face remained pale.

Thinking of how he had led her to watch some porno, Klein tried to change the topic, in embarrassment.

"I plan on heading to the cafeteria to eat something. Do you want to come with me?"

Each member could bring one guest.

As for how to explain the sudden appearance of the guest, Klein's plan was to go out for a while and then come back.

Miss Bodyguard replied in a neutral tone, "I can go without eating for two weeks."

As she spoke, she turned her back to Klein and floated toward the mirror, disappearing in an instant.

What exactly is her Sequence.… Klein thought curiously, putting the portable camera back in its case.

After doing all of this, he went to the bathroom and relieved himself.

After washing his hands and wiping his face, Klein looked into the mirror and examined his appearance.

As he hadn't shaved this morning, he had quite a stubble. His hair was parted to the sides in a three-to-seven ratio, and a pair of gold-rimmed

glasses hung on his face. He looked refined and scholarly, with a tinge of maturity.

There's a definite difference from the past. I can still be recognized if scrutinized. Once my beard grows to a certain extent, I wouldn't have to worry that much… I wouldn't need to be afraid of anything when I advance to Sequence 6 Faceless… Klein took out his golden pocket watch, opened it, and walked out of the bathroom. He took his suitcase and went to the cafeteria on the first floor.

It was just after nine, so breakfast was still served. Klein chose a double-sided, half-cooked fried egg, a loaf of white bread, a cake of butter, a Desi pie, a serving of bacon, and a cup of Marquis Black Tea with a piece of lemon floating on its surface.

While looking for a seat, he suddenly saw a familiar face. It was the surgeon who had recommended him to the club, Aaron Ceres.

The tall, thin gentleman was sitting alone in the corner, having finished his breakfast and was sipping his coffee as he leafed through the newspaper.

"Good morning, Dr. Ceres." Klein walked over and greeted the slightly cold Aaron.

The surgeon nudged the frame over his nose and said, "Just call me Aaron, Detective Moriarty."

"According to the principle of reciprocity, you have to call me Sherlock." Klein sat down. "Any news today? I came out in such a hurry that I haven't read the newspapers."

"The Intis ambassador was assassinated. A terrorist organization by the name of the Aurora Order declared responsibility for it. Sigh, this world is becoming more and more chaotic. Sooner or later, there will be an all-out war in the Southern and Northern Continent," Aaron expressed his feelings.

"The war has never stopped, Sir; it's just that we've been able to enjoy peace," Klein finished his fried egg and replied with a smile. "What a pity that such an important case wouldn't seek the help of private detectives like us."

Aaron flipped through the newspaper.

"This news doesn't have much to do with us. What's really important is that the House of Lords and the House of Commons will pass a motion either today or tomorrow after a long debate. First, it's the Civil Servant Unified Examination Bill, as well as the relevant guidance and actual plans. Second, is the establishment of the Atmospheric Pollution Council; and third, the establishment of the independent alkaline industry inspector. The latter two involve pollution. God, they're finally paying attention to this problem. The patients in the hospital with pulmonary attacks have been rising constantly.

Has it finally been passed? I wonder how Benson's preparations are… Will it be affected by my death… Klein's smile suddenly beamed.

"That's good news."

"To Mary, this is extremely good news. She wishes to make herself or her husband, Doragu, become one of the members of the National Atmospheric Pollution Council. She has a higher chance since she doesn't hold any positions in a commercial company and is a devotee of the Goddess. Besides, in any organization, there's ultimately a need for balance." Aaron mentioned Klein's employer. "I suggested to her that she should frequent the club since we have quite a number of House of Commons Members of Parliament as club members."

In the Loen Kingdom, the Members of Parliament of the House of Commons were mainly composed of wealthy people and the representatives of certain nobles. However, there were also many professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, priests, teachers, scientists, and accountants.

The Quelaag Club targeted a variety of professionals in the middle class, without distinguishing between them by their political inclinations.

Klein didn't know much about such things, so he just said a few words in response before changing the subject.

"Aaron, it's Friday today. Don't you need to head back to the hospital?"

"No, I'm on leave. It's been terrible lately." Aaron suddenly frowned.

"What happened?" Klein drank a mouthful of black tea.

Since Bakerland had just been assassinated, and Rosago's body had been thrown into a sewer far away, he didn't know when it would be found. Klein was concerned about the aftereffects and the imperfection of his disguise, so he didn't plan on taking missions that were too difficult or easily exposed his identity; therefore, he was interested in simple matters which held potential and handsome rewards.

Aaron put down the newspaper and sighed.

"I've been very unlucky recently. I've had a few consecutive failed surgeries. Fortunately, there were no serious consequences. Otherwise, my license would've been revoked."

Although it wasn't big news for surgeons to cause deaths in the present era since it was common, the penalties were still quite severe if a serious accident occurred due to a surgeon's negligence.

Well, I can't help much… Well, actually, I know of a luck enhancement ritual, but its effect is to send you above a gray fog… Klein lowered his head and began to nibble at his bread.

After breakfast, he said goodbye to Aaron, went to withdraw 500 pounds in cash, and gave 300 pounds to Miss Bodyguard before returning home.

While waiting for the photos to develop, he hoped for a simple job to be entrusted to him. Unfortunately, none of them came to him.

In the evening, Klein prepared to head out again, his target—Bravehearts Bar.

Taking the opportunity of having Miss Bodyguard around, he hoped to get in touch with more Beyonder circles.

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CHAPTER 256
MEETING THE APOTHECARY AGAIN

Before leaving the house, Klein tossed a coin to inquire if it was beneficial for him to visit the Bravehearts Bar that day.

After receiving a negative result, he looked around before whispering into the air, "Is someone monitoring me today?"

After a few seconds of silence, Miss Bodyguard's ethereal voice suddenly sounded from behind him.

"No."

Klein subconsciously looked back, but he failed to find Miss Bodyguard.

His attention quickly returned to the answer he received as he couldn't help but let out a snicker in his heart.

MI9 isn't even putting me on their suspect list at all!

After confirming that Rosago hadn't sought me out, they completely put me aside.

Should I feel honored or insulted?

It's true that a detective that busies himself looking for cats has no way of being associated with the assassination of an ambassador or getting rid of a Sequence 5 expert…

Furthermore, MI9 has been monitoring me for quite some time. My panic, my helplessness, and my struggle for self-preservation were laid out for them to see. It's obvious that I can't inflict any substantial harm to the ambassador…

With that in mind, Klein put on his half top hat, carried his black silver-inlaid cane, and walked out of 15 Minsk Street. He spent 2 soli for a rental carriage that brought him to Bravehearts Bar on Iron Gate Street in the Backlund Bridge area.

He entered like a regular, walked past the cheering drunkards around the boxing ring, and rapped the countertop when he came to the bar counter.

"One glass of Southville beer."

The bartender looked up at him and mumbled, "Kaspars is in Card Room 3."

Klein smiled and pushed five one-penny copper coins to the man.

Then, carrying the wooden cup and sipping a white, smooth, frothy Southville beer, he walked around two of the rowdiest, liveliest stages that stank the most and knocked on the door of Card Room 3.

Kaspars was playing Texas poker with unlimited stakes. Stacks of cash were piled high in front of him, as well as yellow coins that piled up in a dazzling heap.

Noticing Klein's gaze, the black-market arms dealer with the huge scar on his face twitched his big red nose and casually said, "I don't like using chips as they don't feel real to me. It's still the texture of cash and the weight of the coins that leaves me intoxicated. It the same as f**king women!"

After finishing that sentence, Kaspars frowned slightly.

"What are you doing here again?"

Klein didn't answer directly, but he gestured with his mouth to speak outside.

"Damn it! I was going to clean them up with this hand! Bullshit, I'm folding!" Kaspars tossed the two cards in front of him into the middle of the table, then he limped to the door and said to Klein, "You'd better have a good reason!"

After leaving the card room and coming to the corner, Klein said in a suppressed voice, "I want to know when the most recent gathering will be, just like the last one."

Kaspars looked at him suspiciously. "Haven't you struck a deal with Maric?"

"It's not about hiring bodyguards. Regarding that, heh heh, you know… I've become very interested in it." Klein was telling the truth.

Kaspars hesitated and then said, "There will be a gathering tonight. The organizer is the same person as last time, but you'll have to wait for more than half an hour. I'll inform them first. You showed your reputation last time, so I don't think there'll be too much of a problem."

"No problem, I'll pay you." Klein touched the bills in his pocket.

"You just need to pay 1 pound this time." Kaspars acted like he was very generous.

"It's worth it," Klein said as the corners of his lips curled up.

After paying Kaspars, he found a seat and sat down, drinking the rich malt-scented Southville beer and enjoying the competition on the ring.

"I can beat and take them down at the same time…" Klein quickly came to this conclusion.

After about ten minutes, Kaspars returned to the bar, looked around, and said in a low voice, "They agreed."

"We'll head there after half an hour. Holy Lord of Storms, I hope you haven't forgotten that mask."

Klein gave a positive answer.

He slowed down his drinking as he began sipping, and he took half an hour to finish the 500 ml of Southville beer.

It was the same path they took as the previous time, and it was the same house without any light. Klein put on the iron mask that only covered half of his face, and he watched as Kaspars knocked on the door rhythmically.

The rhythm is different from last time. The knocking changes all the time… Klein listened carefully for a moment, then saw the small plank of the door open and a pair of eyes peer out.

After the indistinguishable process like before, he put on the hooded robe and hid his entire face in the shadows.

It was still the same living room, with a candle flickering in the dim light. Klein randomly found a seat and quietly sat down.

But unlike before, he no longer felt suppressed or tensed; instead, he leisurely looked around.

The cold wind that blew across the back of his neck made him certain that Miss Bodyguard had followed him in without anyone noticing.

*As expected, there are no Sequence 5 experts in this gathering. There might not even be a Sequence 6… *Klein thought.

After listening in on the conversation for a while, he saw the round-faced Apothecary change his posture as if he wanted to speak.

As expected, the Apothecary who had half his chubby face exposed quickly raised his hand and said, "Black Snake has apparently died in the sewers…

"Those beasts are still rampant."

Black Snake died? Klein was surprised to hear the news.

Black Snake was the man who had sold him the remains of a Listener, allowing him to "successfully" create the Language of Foulness. It was suspected that he was from the Aurora Order.

His strength wasn't low at all; yet, he actually died performing the simple mission of clearing the beasts in the sewers.… Klein frowned suspiciously. He suddenly thought of something—

When he discovered Zreal's corpse, he had heard thumping sounds deep in the sewers.

By the time he led Ian there, parts of Zreal's body had been eaten by strange beasts.

*That was at the bottom of Iron Carbon Street in the East Borough, quite far from the Backlund Bridge area, and I wonder if there's a connection… *Klein had no impulse to verify this.

News of Black Snake's death quickly spread through the dark room, attracting the murmurs of many. A sense of fear spread through them, as though they had experienced it themselves.

The Apothecary clapped his hands and said, "So, what should I do?"

The whispers suddenly disappeared, and a frozen silence filled the room.

As the Apothecary had advised him without being afraid of offending him, Klein thought for a moment and said, "If I were you, I would give up on the rest of the herbs and never go there again."

"Why? They'll mature very soon, and those beasts that hide in the depths of the sewers usually won't come out," the Apothecary asked hesitantly.

Klein deliberately said in a hoarse voice, "Black Snake likely has an organization backing him. His death definitely would've caused an investigation. I believe you don't want to interact with them, right?"

Having the remains of a Listener didn't imply that Black Snake was an Aurora Order member, by referring to the True Creator as a "great being", this was confirmed.

Moreover, he would rather believe that this was the case rather than hope for a fluke.

"Yeah." The Apothecary nodded slightly, seemingly having made up his mind.

Klein added, "If I were you, I would even anonymously report this matter to the police."

"What?" Many gathering members exclaimed.

Klein explained without a change in tone, "Since the beasts in the sewers can kill Black Snake, it means that they're very dangerous. And since everyone lives in Backlund, if it really causes a major catastrophe, it's hard to guarantee that we won't be implicated.

"That's why the best option is to attract the attention of the police and let the officials handle this matter.

"We can enjoy a good outcome without any risks. Isn't that nice?"

Just as he finished his sentence, the old gentleman, Eye of Wisdom applauded.

"Such a great idea! We're afraid of the official Beyonders, but similarly, we can make use of them. We don't have to handle everything on our own."

That's because I was an official Beyonder, so my train of thought would definitely be different from pure savages like you… Klein smiled as he lampooned.

After speaking, he became a bystander again, listening to people peddling or requesting for items. As he watched the deals which succeeded or failed, he found nothing of interest.

He temporarily didn't announce the Beyonder ingredients he needed, planning to observe the circle of Beyonders a few more times.

Seconds turned to minutes and finally, Eye of Wisdom arranged for people to leave every three minutes.

Klein was the first to leave the previous time, so he didn't know what happened next. Now, he noticed that there were at least five exits. The attendants of the Eye of Wisdom would lead different people to different passages, trying their best to space them out and drag out time.

After more than half an hour, there were only three members of the gathering left. Apart from Eye of Wisdom, the other two were Klein and the suspected Apothecary.

Eye of Wisdom looked at Klein and laughed with his aged voice.

"Looks like you're quite lucky."

He recognized me as the man who had bought the ominous item from Black Snake… Klein smiled. "Yes, my bet paid off."

Hearing their conversation, the Apothecary widened his eyes as he examined Klein. After a long time, he finally said, "Do you have another mystical charm that affects luck? I already regarded you as a dead person."

You're so direct… Klein tactfully answered, "Maybe I'm lucky enough myself."

Actually, he did want such an item.

Eye of Wisdom sighed and said, "Young lad, don't always bet on your luck, especially on matters such as this. Even if you've won many times in the past, just one loss would doom you for eternity."

"I know. That's why I've come to this gathering to see if I can buy any useful items. Heh, I can be considered the same as all of you now," Klein said, seemingly casual.

"Same?" The Apothecary gave an exaggerated sigh. "I should've listened to my teacher!"

Teacher… He seems to be a suspected Apothecary… The Apothecary pathway is controlled by the Church of Mother Earth and the Life School of Thought… The Life School of Thought passes down their teachings through mentoring… Klein's heart skipped a beat and asked curiously, "Why do you say that?"

The Apothecary sighed and said, "My teacher told me to choose a path that would make one sufficiently lucky, but in the end, I still became a medicine concocter. As a result, I haven't been able to find the next batch of potion ingredients for this Sequence for a whole two years. I'm envious of your luck."

Make one sufficiently lucky… This is very similar to the Sequence pathway for Monster… He really is from the Life School of Thought… Klein smiled and said, "What's your reason for choosing it?"

The Apothecary suddenly straightened his back and said, "This is a man's choice!

"After knowing that I can concoct medicine to enhance my ability in that field, I chose this path without hesitation!"

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CHAPTER 257 "2-081"

…*What a godlike reason.*… After hearing the Apothecary's answer, Klein was unable to control the changes in his expression despite being a Clown. Fortunately, he was wearing an iron mask over his face.

The Apothecary didn't notice the reactions Klein and Eye of Wisdom had, and he began to let his hair down.

"That's why I really like Backlund. There are a lot of prostitutes prowling the streets, hanging outside music halls, theaters, waiting in the streets and alleys. They're either professionals or working part-time. They were originally maidservants or workers, each with different flavors. It's said that in places in the West Borough, bankrupt aristocratic ladies might occasionally appear. That's really something to look forward to."

"…” Klein nudged the iron mask that covered his face upwards and quickly changed the topic. "Did your teacher have any objections to your choice?"

The Apothecary shook his head slightly.

"No, he just kicked me out of the damn door after teaching me all the knowledge in the field of herbs, telling me to roam the world and experience life. Damn it, he didn't even tell me where to find the next potion ingredients!"

At this point, the Apothecary looked at Klein and added, "If you know where to obtain Spring of the Elves marrow crystals, please do tell me. I'll pay you for it. Of course, you can also first buy it and then sell it to me for a

higher price. You're a lucky guy. Who knows, you might help fulfill my wish."

"Alright," Klein casually agreed. He then asked, thoughtfully, "When that happens, can I use it to exchange for the potion formula for Apothecary?"

From his point of view, an Apothecary was very useful as support. He could use it to groom helpers.

The Apothecary, who wasn't considered too fat, quickly shook his head and said, "No way!

"I can only teach my students."

*Is this a rule of the Life School of Thought? He might have made an oath with some secret existence as a witness… *Klein wasn't surprised.

At this moment, the Apothecary let out a laugh.

"But I can tell you where you can get the Apothecary formula. It's right here in Backlund."

"Brilliant." Klein was pleasantly surprised.

Realizing that Eye of Wisdom was about to send him off, he hurriedly asked, "Mr. Apothecary, do you have any medication to treat mental disorders and other problems?"

Klein was acting for Miss Bodyguard, to make her feel more assured, having been slightly influenced by the True Creator and becoming a potential lunatic, that he was desperately trying to find a cure.

"Yes, there's a sedative, ten soli for one. I'll bring you four in the next gathering. Trust me, this is definitely much more useful than the ones in the hospitals. I've added some materials with spirituality," the Apothecary replied without hesitation.

*How expensive… In the underground market at Tingen, the number of sedatives that originated from the hospitals ranged from 1 to 2 soli, while the variety that leaked from the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and Machinery Hivemind ranged from 4 to 5 soli… *As this thought flashed through his mind, Klein put on a show, looked at Eye of Wisdom, and said, "Dear Sir, may I attend the next gathering?"

"Yes, your last two performances are proof of your goodwill. Young lad, watch out for the Backlund Morning Post daily. When there's an advertisement for the purchase of goods by the Ernst Firm on the fifth page, it means that there would be a meeting here at eight o'clock the next evening. The strength and the frequency of the knocking is based on the prices listed. The first number is the number of heavy strikes. The second number is the number of light strikes. The third number is the number of long pauses and the fourth is the number of short pauses. The rest are meaningless," Eye of Wisdom said with a nod.

After describing the information, he sighed and said, "The lives of Beyonders who are neither official or part of an organization aren't as nice as you imagine. On the one hand, we have to keep secrets, avoid the officials, and at any time, we have to maintain a cautious and careful state. On the other hand, we have to fight against the possibility of losing control and madness. Too many of our kind have died because of these two matters.

"Even if we successfully evade the official's notice and avoid losing control and going crazy, we would still fall into the predicament of lacking ingredients and the inability to find items we want or obtain sufficient knowledge. I organized such a gathering to get everyone to help each other.

"Unfortunately, this is an era of scarce mysteries. Many Beyonder ingredients are rarely seen."

Yes, but I have Mr. Hanged Man who knows the coordinates of some of the primitive islands, and City of Silver's The Sun who is constantly fighting against the various monsters in the depths of the darkness… I can rely on

them to obtain some of the Beyonder ingredients… Klein politely stood up with his back bent as he bowed to Eye of Wisdom.

"Your character is admirable."

After sitting down again, Klein suddenly remembered something and asked after some deliberation, "Gentlemen, do you have any mystical items? The kind that Black Snake sold me, but ones without too serious negative effects. I wish to have some sort of ability to protect myself."

His plan was to find something that caught his interest, determine the price, and then determine the target accordingly.

However, I don't have any money right now, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't have any in the future… Can't I make an inquiry about the price without money? Klein silently added in his heart.

The Apothecary spread out his hands, indicating that he didn't have any, and even if he did, he wouldn't sell them. Eye of Wisdom chuckled and said, "I do have some, but I don't know what you would like to buy? Give me an approximate range."

Some… He's most likely a Savant pathway Beyonder who relies on external items… Klein didn't hide his envy as he said, "Something stronger than me. Not something that improves my combat skills. It's best if it has some mystical powers."

He didn't go into details so as to maintain his image as a newcomer.

Eye of Wisdom smiled and said, "I have an item that suits your requirements. It's former code name was 2-081."

"2-081?" Klein asked, puzzled.

His puzzlement was just a disguise on the surface, but on the inside, he was very shocked.

Is this a Sealed Artifact that leaked out from the Chanis Gate of the Church of the Evernight Goddess? Klein didn't expect to see a familiar code name here.

Eye of Wisdom casually explained simply, "Many mystical items have rather obvious side effects that can cause certain harm. Therefore, the seven orthodox Churches would seek them out and seal them. They're called Sealed Artifacts and are distinguished using numbers as code names."

"Over a long period of debate and exchanges, the seven churches formed a uniform naming convention. It labels the different danger grades with 0, 1, 2, and 3. Among them, 0 is the most dangerous. Rumors say that some are terrifying items that can destroy countries or even the world.

"The seven orthodox churches will exchange information regarding Grade 0 and Grade 1, telling each other which ones they possess. Therefore, Grade 0 and Grade 1 code names won't be repeated. Grade 2 and Grade 3 are arranged by their respective churches, so different churches might have the same code name."

Klein had long known about the general situation within the Nighthawks, but he was puzzled by something.

"Information regarding Grade 0 and Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts is exchanged?"

Wouldn't that be disclosing major secrets? It will allow the other churches to know how many hidden cards they have!

Of course, this could also be seen as a form of strategic deterrence, to avoid direct conflict between the seven churches… Klein considered the possible reasons.

"Yes. Although I'm unable to explain the reason for doing that, it has indeed happened. Legend has it that during the end of the Fourth Epoch or the beginning of the Fifth Epoch, the seven churches came to an agreement,"

Eye of Wisdom said at an unhurried pace. "My 2-081 was obtained from the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom. It allows you to understand and comprehend many things. Even an enemy's Beyonder powers can be rapidly identified, allowing me to know of their strengths and weaknesses. I'll also have a chance at being able to mimic them. The stronger the opponent, the higher the chance of failure. Of course, even success would definitely result in a huge difference from the original."

That sounds very strong… Proof that knowledge is power? In the end, will there be a situation where omniscience is equal to omnipotence? Hmm… I retract my previous judgment. Old Mister Eye of Wisdom might not be an Appraiser. His identification of items might have relied on Sealed Artifact 2-081… Klein clicked his tongue silently as he asked with interest, "So, how much would I need to buy it?

"What flaws does it have?"

"It will keep you in a state where your mind is churning at high speeds. Once it exceeds the time limit, you'll become a retard," Eye of Wisdom replied simply without providing enough details.

At this moment, the Apothecary beside him muttered, "Perhaps your brain has already been damaged. You keep talking about your collection. Sooner or later, someone will rob you and kill you!"

Sir, your persuasions are always so repugnant… Klein couldn't help but lampoon.

Eye of Wisdom laughed and said, "How do you know that I'm not saying it on purpose to make greedy people attack me?

"Yes, it's like the entrapment law once described by Emperor Roselle."

After the laughter stopped, he patted the armrest of his sofa and sighed. "As a person who loves collecting things, it's excruciating not being able to flaunt my collection to others."

He then looked at Klein.

"I'm sorry. 2-081 isn't for sale. It's my best collection, and back then, I spent 6800 pounds to buy it. A Sealed Artifact at this level can cost from 4000 to 20,000 pounds and is determined by its effects and negative side effects. However, most of time, they can't be bought with money."

Then why did you say so much… Klein controlled the twitching of his mouth.

Seemingly sensing his reaction, Eye of Wisdom chuckled and said, "What I really wish to recommend are two items. The first is a brooch. It can allow you to ward off spirits and purify them, as well as use a portion of the spells in the Sun domain. The flaw is that as long as you wear it, you will never feel coolness. You will forever be stuck in the warm summer of the south. The other is a hat that can change shapes. Wearing it allows you to move freely underwater for at least half an hour and allows you to use some Water or Wind domain spells. The flaw is that you will desire water. Once you walk on land, you will gradually weaken.

"The prices of similar items range from 1500 to 3500 pounds, and sometimes, even if you raise the price severalfold, they aren't necessarily for sale because they rarely appear. It took me more than three decades to collect a few.

Klein nodded slightly and said, "I'll think about it, and I'll make the decision during the next gathering."

At this point, he deliberately smiled and said, "Besides, I don't have that much money right now."

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CHAPTER 258
MURDER CASE

The concrete road had turned dirty from prolonged rain. Two gas lamps, the height of an adult male, along the two sides of the road emitted a bright but misty light due to the moisture on the glass.

A rental carriage drove through the night as the surrounding pedestrians either wore hats or carried umbrellas.

Klein leaned against the wall, idly admiring the evening streets of Backlund.

At that moment, he suddenly felt the temperature inside the carriage drop significantly. A gloomy and cold wind was swirling about.

Klein jerked his head around and saw that Miss Bodyguard, dressed in a black Gothic regal dress, was sitting across from him without him even realizing it.

Her voice was ethereal and dreamy.

"That Eye of Wisdom sensed my presence."

As expected… Klein nodded, unsurprised. "He has several mystical items; perhaps he sensed you because of them. I even suspect that he has an organization behind him."

Otherwise, it's quite impossible for Eye of Wisdom to collect several relatively powerful mystical items in thirty years with his power alone. Previously, Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos only had a single Creeping

Hunger despite being one of the seven great pirate admirals. Of course, it was possible that the latter had high standards and ordinary mystical items didn't catch his attention. After all, with Creeping Hunger, he could be more well-rounded and nearly be without any weaknesses.

Yes, for Eye of Wisdom himself to be rich there has to be a rather good explanation as well. He's organized so many gatherings, and once he finds a suitable mystical item, he would spare no expense to get it. Having a few in his collection isn't that unbelievable… Sigh, it's like he has a gold mine at home, or he runs a bank… Klein lampooned silently.

He didn't mention in detail that he had guessed that Eye of Wisdom was from the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, or from the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, out of fear that he would expose to Miss Bodyguard that he wasn't someone who had just become a Beyonder.

The blonde Miss Bodyguard nodded slightly, as though agreeing with Klein's suspicions.

Suddenly, she frowned and looked at the window opposite her.

"A rich smell of blood."

There's a strong smell of blood… Klein turned his head in puzzlement and looked out the window.

There was a secluded alley in the sparse drizzle.

Near the mouth of the alley, a woman wearing a gorgeous dress was on the ground.

At that moment, a pedestrian walked past and on careful inspection, let out a sudden scream.

The screams startled the horse slightly as the carriage driver quickly tightened the reins, slowing down the carriage.

Under the light of the gas lamp, Klein saw the pale face of the woman lying on the ground at the mouth of the alley. There was a deep gash in her stomach, and her internal organs seemed to have been hollowed out.

The blood on the ground around her was flowing slowly, crimson and thick.

This… As a qualified former Nighthawk, he quickly thought of many similar cases.

These were often related to devil worship!

And when it came to devil worship, it was almost always tied to ancient organizations. It was the Blood Sanctify Sect that first appeared in the Fourth Epoch!

According to the records, this was a loose alliance formed due to the worship of devils. It consisted of several so-called devil clans, such as the Nois, Andariel, and Beria clans. They weren't subordinate to each other.

In their bid to proselytize faith in the devil, they committed many murders. Back in Tingen, the accountant for the Nighthawks, Mrs. Orianna, was one such victim who was thankfully saved.

Of course, not all similar cases were committed by them. Many people felt that such acts were very cool and began to imitate them.

"It looks like it was done by the Blood Sanctify Sect," Miss Bodyguard whispered as her figure rapidly turned translucent before vanishing. She didn't care if Klein understood her or comprehended the situation.

At that moment, the carriage had already passed the scene of the crime. Klein also noticed that the patrolling police had arrived, so he held back his idea of getting off the carriage to observe and instead, chose to act as an ordinary citizen who was passing by.

Yes, Citizen Mr. Moriarty…

The Blood Sanctify Sect has the Criminal pathway, which is also known as the Devil pathway. It's said that after Sequence 7, the corresponding Beyonder would gradually turn demonic. However, they would only reveal those signs under certain circumstances…

Sequence 9 Criminals have strong bodies, keen instincts, and a variety of criminal abilities, but their conscience isn't gone yet… Sequence 8, known by its ancient name "Coldblooded," has the modern name "Unwinged Angel." It means that from that moment forth, they lose their conscience and revel in evil desires, with bodies that look even more inhuman. They would also obtain some of the magical powers of the devil. Sequence 7 Serial Killer grasps a good deal of knowledge and rituals regarding devil worship. They like to please the devil with special serial murders…

I don't know the Sequences after that…

The information regarding the Blood Sanctify Sect and the Devil pathway flashed past Klein's mind. The rain outside seemed to become heavier as the rain on the windows converged and fell, and the whole world became quiet and unclear.

*What's the point of thinking so much? Such matters would definitely be taken over by a Beyonder squad. It might be the Mandated Punishers or Nighthawks. There's no need for me to worry. *Klein shook his head with a laugh as he muttered in his mind.

By the time he returned to 15 Minsk Street, he had forgotten about the murder case. He went next door and knocked on the Sammers' front door, asking Mrs. Stelyn to tell Mary that she could come for the evidence tomorrow afternoon. Following that, he washed up and read the newspapers, learning about the current situation and news in Backlund.

On Saturday morning the next day, Klein enjoyed his breakfast slowly and went out to pick up the freshly developed photographs. He chose the one with the best view of Doragu Gale's and Erica Taylor's face, one that brought out their passion the most.

After putting the photos away, he went to the Rice Police Station before Mrs. Mary arrived and successfully got the bail money that was worth ten pounds back.

In the process, he also saw the real Sergeant Faxine and felt a little uncomfortable.

After withdrawing the remaining 500 pounds in cash from his account, Klein was finally done with everything after having a busy morning.

Before he prepared lunch, he handed the remaining 600 pounds to Miss Bodyguard in one go, leaving 146 pounds 8 soli, and 5 pence on him. That was all his liquid funds.

Other than Miss Justice, I have no other debts… Klein cooked himself a T-bone steak and sprinkled it with black pepper sauce.

Just as he was enjoying the taste of the medium well steak whilst in a good mood, the doorbell suddenly rang and resounded through his house.

"Mrs. Mary? Isn't this too early?" Puzzled, Klein put down his fork and knife, and he walked to the door.

He paused for two seconds as the image of the visitor outside the door appeared in his mind.

It was an old-fashioned gentleman in a light gray overcoat, a silk top hat, and he held a black and gold cane. He had sharp blue eyes, and his temples were streaked with white. His wrinkles were deeply engraved in his face, causing his facial muscles to seemingly sag.

"May I know who you're looking for?" Klein asked after opening the door.

The old gentleman said in a thick Midseashire accent, "Are you Sherlock, Detective Moriarty?"

"Do you have something you wish to entrust to me?" Klein nodded and made way, leading the old gentleman into the living room.

He hesitated for two seconds, then asked, "Would you like coffee or tea?"

"A cup of hot water, please." The old gentleman had taken off his hat and sat down.

Very well, it's very simple… Maybe I should consider getting an assistant to serve tea and clean the place… As Klein's mind wandered, he turned to the kitchen and rinsed a glass.

After placing the hot water in front of the old gentleman, he walked to the sofa and sat down with his hands folded.

"How may I address you?"

"Millet Carter," the old gentleman answered simply.

"Mr. Carter, what would you like to entrust me with?" Klein asked directly without bothering to exchange pleasantries.

As he spoke, he quietly activated his Spirit Vision to observe Carter.

*This old gentleman is in quite good health. There are some problems with the color of the joints of his left leg—probably arthritis… His emotions are mostly blue from calm thinking, with a hint of anxiety… *With just a glance, Klein had come to a general conclusion.

Millet Carter lifted the white porcelain cup and, while rubbing its surface, said, "The thing is… I've bought a house on Williams Street. Heh, I come from Midseashire and because of my business, I'll be living in Backlund permanently."

Williams Street… Where's that? Having been in Backlund for less than a month, Klein, who had to consult the map or rely on his intuition, tried his

best to appear staid and reliable.

Millet Carter looked at him, and under his gaze, he continued, "Rumor has it that the house was originally owned by a bankrupt viscount. That was about two to three decades ago. After a few changes of hands, I finally bought it.

"I planned on doing some renovations that suited the modern style, but I discovered a hidden secret door in the basement which leads to a very large underground structure. Considering that it might not be safe inside, I temporarily stopped construction, and I prevented the workers and servants from rashly exploring it. I hope that you can help me confirm the situation inside the underground structure."

*Underground *structure… *Ancient ruins? Secret treasure?* Klein thought and said, "Why didn't you call the police?

"The resources that the police can mobilize are more than a hundred times that of a private detective like me can muster. The results of the exploration will definitely be better and more reliable."

Millet Carter rubbed his nose bridge.

"I don't want too many people to know about this, especially the government.

"If I confirm that there is no danger within the underground structure, then I intend to use it as part of the structure and re-purpose it.

"I know that this is a high risk for you, and I'm willing to pay 50 pounds for it. But you can't have more than three assistants, and I can make up for it later, depending on the circumstances."

50 pounds, that's quite a high price… If I were an ordinary detective, that would be equivalent to two or three months of my income… He's just arrived in Backlund and doesn't know any other detectives. He could only

read the newspapers to look for hires and ended up coming to me… Klein hesitated for a few seconds.

"Let me think about it."

He suddenly revealed an apologetic smile, pointed behind him and said, "I'm need to use the bathroom."

Millet Carter nodded slightly and took a sip of hot water.

After entering the bathroom and closing the wooden door, Klein looked at the mirror and took out a copper penny.

Because he had Miss Bodyguard with him, he couldn't confirm it above the gray fog, so he could only rely on his own divination skills.

"I should accept this commission."

…

Klein chanted seven times and flicked the coin as he watched it tumble down.

Thud!

The copper coin fell into his palm, and the king's portrait faced up, indicating a positive response.

Klein slightly nodded, and whispered into the air, "What does your intuition tell you?"

Miss Bodyguard's figure quickly appeared in the mirror. She replied expressionlessly, "There's a certain amount of danger, but it's not great."

Very good… Klein put away the coin, washed his hands, and walked out of the bathroom and into the living room.

He looked at Millet Carter and said with a smile, "I'll take this commission."

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CHAPTER 259
UNDERGROUND STRUCTURE

After signing a contract with Millet Carter and receiving an advance payment of ten pounds, Klein didn't rush to Williams Street immediately. Instead, he made an appointment for four in the afternoon.

Millet was understanding with regard to this. Alone, Detective Sherlock Moriarty definitely had to recruit people to carry out the exploration.

When the old gentleman left, Klein immediately returned to the dining table and cut the steak which had turned cold before wolfing it down.

*Seriously, doesn't he need to eat lunch? Why must he pick such a time to come… *After barely filling his stomach, Klein bitterly began cleaning up.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, Mrs. Mary arrived as scheduled. Her eyes were slightly red and puffy, but her face was turning gloomy. Stelyn Sammer, who accompanied her, had no choice but to maintain her silence.

Klein handed over an envelope containing his carefully chosen photo.

"Madam, please confirm it."

Mary paused for two seconds and slowly took in a breath. Then, she took the envelope, pulled out the photo, and examined it.

“…Excellent, very excellent. You're the most efficient and responsible detective I've ever met. I'm honored to introduce you as a member of the Quelaag Club… This is the remaining 7 pounds for the payment. You

deserve it." Mary took out a wallet from her leather handbag and counted out a five-pound note and two one-pound notes.

Then, without waiting for Klein's response, she stuffed the photo back into the envelope, put it into her handbag, and abruptly got up to leave.

*Tap. Tap. Tap. *Her buttonless boots made hurried sounds as she stomped on them. Stelyn Sammer struggled to keep up.

As she opened the door, Mary stumbled and almost fell, but fortunately, Stelyn caught her.

With this episode, Mary clearly slowed down and seemed to turn calm.

Madam, you forgot to take the portable camera… I'll give it to Mrs. Sammer later, and she'll bring it to you… Klein silently watched this scene, slightly shaking his head without saying anything.

He returned to the second floor, took a nap, waking up comfortably to the bell chimes of the nearby church.

Klein had already searched the map and confirmed that Williams Street was at the border of the West Borough and Empress Borough, a residential area in the heart of Backlund.

A nice house in West Borough and Hillston Borough costs about 2,500 pounds. Millet Carter's house is close to Empress Borough, and it's a property of a former viscount. The area is definitely sizable. The total purchase price will be at least 3,500 pounds, maybe even 5,000 pounds. That will be enough for a pretty decent mystical item… He actually came visiting me without a housekeeper or an attendant, perhaps because he's new in Backlund and hasn't settled in? Klein put on his double-breasted coat, hat, and held his cane before heading out into Minsk Street.

The gas lamps haven't been lit yet, and the streets were surprisingly darker than during the evenings; however, the air was fairly alright, without the

suffocating air in the boroughs to the east.

Taking a rental carriage, he went all the way to Williams Street. Klein saw a waiting manservant outside the Unit 8 house.

The manservant, who was dressed in a red vest and light-colored trousers, bowed respectfully at the incoming visitor.

"Good afternoon, might I inquire if you are Detective Moriarty?"

"Yes, I have an appointment with Mr. Carter." Klein nodded and followed the manservant into a mansion with a garden and lawn.

The house was two stories tall. The first floor was in a mess, with a lot of construction materials placed everywhere. There were workers coming in and doing some modifications.

Millet Carter wasn't wearing a hat. Covering his nose, he walked over.

"I'm very sorry about the mess and dirt here, but I do wish that everything will be fine before my family arrives in Backlund. I can only urge them to keep working nonstop."

Having said that, he looked at the manservant and instructed, "Continue watching them."

It's no wonder that he didn't bring any servants with him. Even his servants have become supervisors… Klein smiled and said, "I know a lot of doctors. They tell me that the newly renovated houses aren't suitable for immediate occupation. One has to wait at least three months to ventilate it well enough. Otherwise, old people and children who aren't strong enough will easily fall sick."

"Is that so?" Millet led Klein to the basement and asked doubtfully.

"I've never verified it, but I chose to believe in authority. It's said that this originated from the words passed down by Emperor Roselle," Klein casually fabricated an excuse.

Millet nodded, then turned to look at the door. He couldn't help but frown before asking, "Mr. Detective, you didn't bring an assistant?

"There might be quite a bit of danger in that structure."

I have an assistant; it's just that you can't see her… Klein lampooned as he said seriously, "This is my first visit, so I'll advance very carefully. If there are any problems, I will immediately retreat.

"I'm experienced in this area, so I won't put myself in a dangerous situation. If I were matched with inexperienced assistants, it might easily affect my nimble and decisive actions."

Millet was startled.

"You're very professional."

A professional bluff… Klein silently added.

Without any further doubts, Millet led Detective Moriarty through the cluttered living room and down the stairs to a fairly spacious basement.

There were no gas pipes here, but four metal candlesticks were set into the walls, their yellow lights flickering.

Stepping on the stone pavements on the ground, Klein couldn't help but sigh in reflection.

As expected of a noble's property. Even the basement has been "nicely decorated." Furthermore, it's almost as big as the living room of my current house…

At this moment, Millet pointed ahead and said, "There's a secret door over there. It was discovered by the workers when they were renovating."

Klein focused his gaze. With the not-very-bright candlelight, he saw a gray stone door in the corner. It should've been part of the wall, but it was now exposed.

"I'll leave the rest to you. Be safe." The old gentleman, Millet, gave Klein a lighted lantern and cautioned him.

"Has this place been ventilated ahead of time?" Klein asked cautiously.

Millet shook his head indiscernibly.

"It's not particularly stuffy inside, but I didn't let the workers go too far."

"Alright." Klein checked his belongings, put on a black glove, and, under Millet's gaze, unhurriedly carried the lantern and approached the stone door. He pushed it open with his cane.

Amidst the heavy creaking sounds, through the light outside, he saw a deep-colored passageway paved with stone.

There were several wooden doors on both sides of the passageway and at the end. They had already begun to rot, but they were still barely usable.

Not too ancient… However, the ostentatious style of the door and the depth and thickness of the stone slabs don't match… Did the viscount's family change it before? Klein quietly activated his Spirit Vision, gripped his cane, and walked forward, step by step, with the lantern in hand.

The light dispersed the darkness, and when he passed by the rooms on either side, he was able to see a somewhat empty scene through the open door which was likely opened due to the exploration from the workers Millet had hired. There was also a long bench and a table that shared the same aesthetic style as the door.

There's no sign of spirits flashing… Klein did a brief inspection. Without stopping, he proceeded forward until he came to the end of the hall where a bifold black stone door was.

Stretching out his gloved right hand, he half-clamped his cane and slowly pushed against the door.

A jarring sound of friction began to reverberate through the air as the stone door slowly cracked open. Spirit light suddenly appeared in Klein's eyes, reflecting an intertwined aura of different colors.

His heart tightened as he pushed the door open, before taking a few steps back.

The crack in the stone door widened rapidly, and a slimy black creature fell from above.

It was a snake with a triangular head and red floral patterns on its head!

It straightened its upper body, shot out its tongue, and looked at Klein with cold brown eyes.

One snake after another fell from above the door as they piled up at the entrance.

Klein saw a large hall beyond them. In the middle of the hall, countless snakes of various colors slithered together, forming an exaggerated nest of snakes about ten meters wide. The slimy, disgusting feeling assaulted his senses.

Klein felt his scalp turn numb as he couldn't help but take two steps back. He even wanted to look away without daring to look straight ahead.

Although he was a man, he was still afraid of snakes. Snakes were the animal that he was most afraid of.

This stemmed from a psychological trauma in the past. When he was a child—despite being way past his bedtime—he liked to secretly open the door to his room and watch movies with his parents through a crack.

Unfortunately, his parents once watched a snake disaster movie. One scene involved the demolition of a building. The result was the unearthing of a large nest of snakes, and the dense squirming remained deeply imprinted in his mind.

Can the Slumber Charm affect so many snakes? Klein swallowed hard and said to the air, "Do you have any solutions?"

Miss Bodyguard in her black Gothic dress quickly appeared by his side, her mouth tightly closed. She didn't say a thing.

Klein looked at her and she looked back at Klein, but no one spoke.

When a snake slowly slithered out, Klein finally coughed and repeated, "Do you have any solutions?"

Miss Bodyguard didn't answer. Instead, she floated and suddenly, a cold wind blew in the passageway.

Whoosh!

The wind howled as it blew into the hall. The temperatures dropped rapidly as it approached the temperatures of the outside world.

Whoosh!

The densely-packed snakes in the middle of the hall suddenly slithered in all directions, searching for a warmer, more suitable spot to survive.

Two to three minutes later, a thin layer of frost formed on the surface of the hall and the passageway, and countless snakes had disappeared without much of a trace.

Whoosh!

The continued as Klein said, chattering, "T-that's quite enough."

The surging cold wind slowed down, but the cold didn't subside. Miss Bodyguard's figure disappeared once again.

Klein lifted his cane-wielding right hand, covered his mouth and nose, and sneezed. Then, he raised the lantern and cautiously walked through the stone door into the wide hall.

The style here was identical to the passageway outside. There were eight circular columns of the same color erected there.

Metal poles hung from the high dome, and at the bottom were candlesticks carved into different creatures.

An upside-down candlestick… As a university student of the History department, a person who could barely be called an elite in this field, Klein made a preliminary judgment based on this unique arrangement.

A structure of the Fourth Epoch?

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CHAPTER 260
STRANGE STATUES

The history circles of the Northern Continent countries all recognized that the Fourth Epoch was shrouded in thick mystery. It was impossible to tell what it truly was.

The historical records had too many missing pieces and ambiguities for this period of history. There were too few tombs, ancient cities, and literature, that had been unearthed to create an effective confirmation.

However, this didn't mean that no one had done the relevant research. Its rarity implied that there were still some relics and information left behind.

The original Klein was a fanatic towards the history of the Fourth Epoch. He often read journal articles and books, so even now, Klein still remembered a lot of content.

Whether it was the Solomon Empire, Tudor Empire, or Trunsoest Empire, they all had similar architectural styles, architectural styles that went against common sense—they were disorderly, asymmetrical, and they stood out for their frequent use of black.

The most typical characteristic were the candlesticks hanging from the ceiling and the chopped floral pattern marks on black walls.

This was precisely why Klein's first reaction was that the underground structure belonged to the Fourth Epoch when he raised his lantern. He had seen circular metal poles with candlesticks embedded at the bottom, that ran down from the dome, reminding him of the Fourth Epoch which was

shrouded in mystery, leaving many historians and archaeologists regretful of the lack of knowledge in that ancient period.

Several journal articles have mentioned that the number of candlesticks within different buildings are different. Although the three Empires find asymmetry beautiful, they seemed to have strict and meticulous rules in every aspect… Three on the left, and two on the right is the highest standards that ordinary citizens can enjoy. This is based on the structure of the buildings and the houses that remain… Klein raised his arm and held the lantern high. He walked slowly, counting the candlesticks on both sides.

The hall was even wider than he had expected. He had walked for at least a hundred meters before he saw a platform half a meter above the ground. Only then did he see the thick wall that marked the end of the hall.

41 inverted candlesticks on the left, and 40 on the right. T-this is a bit of an exaggeration. What level of aristocracy is this? Powerful nobility? Sigh, the Antigonus and the Zaratul families are all aristocrats of the Fourth Epoch… They were also powerful and terrifying Beyonder family clans. The other noble families should be about the same… Holding the lantern in hand, Klein continued onward. He saw the stairs at the side of the half-height platform and saw the scuffing on the black stone tiles.

Is this really a relic of the Fourth Epoch? A thought flashed through Klein's mind. With his keen eyesight and the light from the lanterns, he found two iron black seats on top of the platform that was half a meter above the ground. The huge, ancient seats overlooked the other seats below.

There were two seats!

Two? Why two? According to the layout, the seat here should represent the person with the most power and authority, but there are two of them? A powerful noble of equal strength? A double count, a double duke, or a double prince? Klein slowly began to feel that his knowledge of history was inadequate.

He clearly remembered that many journal articles mentioned that the three empires—Solomon, Tudor, and Trunsoest, had a strict hierarchy. Based on this theory, there shouldn't have been leaders of equal standing within a faction.

"Strange…" Klein mumbled, in a way meant for Miss Bodyguard.

"What's so strange about that?" An ethereal voice suddenly sounded from behind him. In the vast, dark, empty, and silent ancient hall, this voice was exceptionally frightening.

Klein's mouth twitched as he explained the characteristics, history knowledge, and puzzling points that he had observed to her. He eventually added, "The ventilation here is very good. I wonder if there are any other entrances."

Miss Bodyguard, who had mostly blended into the darkness, listened silently as she gave Klein a penetrating glance.

"How do you know so much?"

Because I was a university student in the History department… Klein cursed silently before smiling.

"If I hadn't chosen to be a detective, perhaps I would've become a diligent young historian."

Miss Bodyguard didn't respond, nor did she disappear; instead, she floated up to the platform first.

With the lantern in hand, Klein quickly followed, discovering that the platform was very large. It was about 40 meters in length and 10 meters in breadth.

"The architectural style is grand and enlarged. It's also one of the characteristics of the Fourth Epoch," he said casually as he carefully

approached the two huge iron-black chairs. He then raised his lantern and carefully inspected it.

"It seems to be meant for a three-meter-tall giant to sit on… There's an emblem on the back of the chair. On this side, it's a black crown… On the other side, it's a hand holding onto a scepter… I wonder what they symbolize on their own…" Klein said to himself, not expecting an answer from Miss Bodyguard.

However, the lady who was floating suddenly said, "This is the Tudor family's emblem."

"Huh?" Klein looked over in surprise, noticing that Miss Bodyguard was referring to the hand holding the scepter.

Tudor family? Is this a relic of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Dynasty? Which royal family member owned this palace? Klein frowned and said, "Do you recognize the other emblem?"

To think that it was ranked as equal to a Tudor family member!

Miss Bodyguard shook her head without a word.

Seeing this, Klein had to give up the idea of studying it for the time being and said, "After the Tudor and Trunsoest families established their respective empires, they both maintained the original style that originated from the Solomon Empire, such as inverted candlesticks, scuffed marks, and so on and so forth. This doesn't comply with common sense. If I were the emperor, even if I had to inherit many things, I would still make certain changes to mark my uniqueness.

"Does this mean that the three empires have hidden, unchanging connections?"

He guessed that Solomon, Tudor, and the Trunsoest families wielded the Dark Emperor, which was the Lawyer pathway. Similar styles were needed

for acting!

Miss Bodyguard remained silent for a few seconds before saying a few words, "Only an Emperor can be called an Emperor."

*Is this a confirmation of my idea? *Klein didn't ask any more questions. With the lantern in hand, he circled the two huge iron-black chairs, but he didn't discover anything else.

"Let's take a look ahead," Klein suggested.

Before he finished his sentence, Miss Bodyguard had already floated towards the end of the platform, but the surrounding gloominess and coldness remained unchanged.

A few meters ahead, Klein saw—with the help of the lantern's glow—seven large, heavy, black stone doors at the base of the hall. They were lined up, two on the left, one in the middle, four on the right, perfectly in line with the Fourth Epoch's pursuit of asymmetry.

Klein passed the cane to his lantern hand, tossed a coin at random, and whispered, "I should begin from the left."

Ding!

The copper penny tumbled down and landed on his palm, portrait facing up.

"Let's go to the left." Klein took the lead.

Miss Bodyguard silently followed until they reached the door on the far left before saying ethereally, "It's the same on the right."

In other words, it didn't matter whether I did the divination… The corner of Klein's mouth curled up as he raised the lantern and examined the symbols and patterns on the door.

With a deep-black background, it was a crimson half-moon that was surrounded by radiant points of light.

This… Klein's pupils constricted suddenly.

This is the Dark Sacred Emblem! The symbol of the Evernight Goddess!

During the Fourth Epoch, the Church of the Evernight Goddess had supported the Tudor Dynasty? He thoughtfully placed his hand on the stone door.

Screech!

The black stone door slowly opened amidst rough and heavy grinding sounds.

As the light from the lantern shone into the room, Klein began to see the interior, bit by bit.

There was a few meters of open space at the entrance—also paved with dark stone tiles—and a platform nearly a meter high.

Klein cautiously moved forward, holding up the lantern to illuminate the item on the platform.

A few seconds later, a fiery radiance formed the outline of a huge statue. It was about four to five meters long and almost filled the entire room.

It was an extremely beautiful lady with a hazy face. Her right hand supported her head as she laid down on the platform. She wore a layered black classical dress that wasn't overly complex. There was a circle of radiating rays at the bottom of her head.

On this lady's dress, there were sparkling specks of radiance. They were pieces of bright and resplendent gems.

At first glance, Klein felt as though he was seeing the night and the stars.

This was outlined against a circular shape under the lady's head that resembled a full moon.

This… Klein's thoughts seemed to freeze, but a guess immediately plowed its way from within.

"Evernight Goddess?" Miss Bodyguard's voice carried a rare hint of puzzlement.

Be it the symbolism or the actual form, it seemed to be a sculpture of the goddess! Klein's guess finally took shape, echoing loudly in his mind.

He remembered asking Captain Dunn Smith about one of the differences between an evil god and a true god. The former was said to have an image that resembled that of an intelligent lifeform, but the latter only had Sacred Emblems formed by symbols!

But today, at this very moment, in this ancient and bizarre underground structure, he saw a statue that looked like the Evernight Goddess.

What did this mean? Just thinking about it made Klein shudder.

Could it be that the goddess was once an evil god?

No… Maybe it's some other evil god that falls into the night domain… However, the Dark Sacred Emblem by the door is no different from the one that is being used presently…

Or perhaps, having the image of an intelligent being isn't a standard method to distinguish between true gods and evil gods? After all, the Captain's level wasn't high enough, and his understanding of the situation wasn't necessarily accurate enough.

It was also possible that the Tudors were deliberately blaspheming the goddess!

Yes, it could also be a way of setting up some strange ritual!

Many thoughts flashed through Klein's mind. It left him feeling puzzled, nervous, and tense. However, he also felt a strange feeling which couldn't be described.

After looking around, Klein, who didn't see anything else, took a deep breath and said, "Let's go to the other doors and take a look."

I wonder what the other six doors correspond to. Would it be equally strange and evil… He thought gravely.

Miss Bodyguard nodded slowly.

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CHAPTER 261
THE INNERMOST ROOM

When he was out of the room, Klein carefully held his cane and lantern in the same hand, leaving his left hand free so that he could retrieve the contents of his pocket as quickly as possible in the event there was a sudden turn of events.

Inside, there were charms, Azik's characteristic, some tarot cards, and apart from the remaining Rosago's characteristic, the All-Black Eye, his pocket contained all the means available to him.

Klein and Miss Bodyguard had barely taken a step to the side when the light of the lantern illuminated the emblem on the door next to them. It was a simple drawing of a baby surrounded by the symbols of wheat, flowers, and spring water.

"The Sacred Emblem of Mother Earth…" Klein said in a solemn voice.

As a former Nighthawk, one of his basic skills was being able to distinguish the symbols of other churches.

Miss Bodyguard nodded slightly, as though to confirm this.

Her black Gothic regal dress looked even eerier and terrifying in such an environment and atmosphere. Her pale face looked like a grieving wraith under the illumination of the lantern.

If any other adventurer were to come here and see this scene, they would definitely flee while stumbling out of fear.

Holding his breath, Klein reached out with his left hand, pushed open the stone door, and raised the lantern high.

He found that the layout here was very similar to the one before, like a perfect fusion between a small prayer room and a giant statue.

Across the empty wheat-colored stone tiles, Klein illuminated the three steps ahead of him with a lantern.

On the platform was a white stone sculpture about four or five meters tall. It was a plump and beautiful lady, with ears of wheat growing from her feet, and she was surrounded by spring water. Her dress seemed to flutter, and embedded in it, there were different herbs and flowers, as well as the depiction of different animals.

The lady's chest was raised high, and in her arms was an adorable infant in swaddling clothes. She stood there, tall and sacred.

"Don't tell me that this is the statue of Mother Earth?" Klein said softly with his lips curled.

Miss Bodyguard didn't answer or deny it.

After checking their surroundings, the duo left the room and opened the third door nearby.

Behind this door was a corridor that allowed four people to walk alongside each other. Ahead of them, it was dark and deep, filled with mystery and oddities; it was unknown where it led to.

"Let's first confirm the situation behind the four doors on the right," Klein suggested.

He didn't dare to rashly enter.

Using her actions as an answer, Miss Bodyguard floated backward.

The duo opened the four stone doors on the right, in succession. They separately saw the Storm Sacred Emblem, which was made up of the symbol of gales and stormy waves; the Sacred Emblem of the Sun, which was surrounded by lines; the Sacred Emblems of the God of Combat, which was made from the combination of the symbol for dusk and a sword-shaped symbol; as well as the Sacred Emblem of Knowledge and Wisdom, which was represented by an open book and an omniscient Eye.

In contrast, there were four suspected statues of deities in the room.

A dignified middle-aged man in black armor, standing over churning waves, surrounded by stormy winds, with lightning flashing behind him and a trident in his hand.

There was a young man in a pure white robe, holding a book of deeds in one hand and a golden sphere which resembled the sun in the other. He was handsome and spirited.

There was a warrior sitting on a throne high above, holding a sword in front of him. His face was hidden behind his helmet's visor, his entire body covered with an indescribable sense of decay.

There was a hooded elder holding a book and the omniscient eye, with only his mouth, wrinkles, and long white beard exposed.

Apart from the God of Steam and Machinery, there were six humanoid statues of the orthodox Gods in this strange hall.

Considering the weak position of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery before the appearance of Roselle, there seemed to be some sort of explanation regarding this problem.

"This is really strange…” Klein exclaimed with a sigh, partially because he couldn't stop it, and partially because he was testing Miss Bodyguard's reaction.

This grand hall, which was a hundred meters deep, actually had six of the orthodox gods collected within it.

This was something unimaginable in the current era!

How could the Church of the Six True Gods allow their gods to live in the same structure as the other gods?!

*This was a custom that only existed during the Fourth Epoch? Also, what's with those humanoid statues? Although they look normal, unlike the sinister Primordial Demoness and the True Creator statues, they still give off weird vibes… Just what had happened to make the images of the six gods evolve into abstract symbols in this day of age… No, perhaps it's been like this all this time, but the master of this place, a noble who's suspected to be a member of the Tudor family, purposely created statues of the six deities for some purpose… Hmm, I thought of an item from a novel from my previous life, the Six Soul Banner… *While he waited for Miss Bodyguard's reply, Klein's mind wandered.

Miss Bodyguard didn't answer his query and instead said blandly, "There's another door."

That's right.… Klein suddenly felt fear.

From his point of view, doors placed in the middle often had a special meaning, perhaps the core region of this ancient structure.

Of course, this also likely implied the highest amount of danger.

In his opinion, doors placed in the center often had a special meaning, perhaps the core of this ancient building. Of course, this also meant that the situation was most likely the most dangerous. "What are your thoughts on that area?" Klein hesitated for two seconds and directly asked.

Under the situation of not being able to use the gray fog to eliminate any interference, he felt that Miss Bodyguard's spiritual perception and spiritual

instincts were more reliable than his divination means at present. After all, she was in a very special state, close to that of a spiritual body, allowing her to communicate with the spirit world without any obstruction to gain revelations.

Miss Bodyguard closed her eyes and replied a few seconds later, "Very dangerous.

"But the danger is subdued.

"Once you venture deeper, don't touch anything."

Subdued danger… Is this equivalent to having something sealed inside? As Klein guessed, he and Miss Bodyguard walked to the central stone door and stepped onto the dark floor.

The light of the lantern seemed to dim a little as though it found it difficult to drive out the darkness ahead. Klein had his left hand in his pocket, holding Azik's copper whistle and a few charms.

After about thirty steps, Miss Bodyguard suddenly stopped.

Klein raised the lantern in his right hand and saw that the road ahead was blocked by boulders and dirt.

On the left and right were two stone doors in the same shape as the ones in the main hall. The right side was ajar and filled with mud and stone.

"Perhaps this ancient structure was aboveground back then, but for some reason, it eventually sank and collapsed," Klein mumbled. "There's only one direction we can choose from."

Before he could finish his words, he saw Miss Bodyguard float ahead, stick to the huge rock, fuse into it, and disappear.

Klein's mouth twitched, and he began to patiently wait.

After a few minutes, Miss Bodyguard came out from the mud on the right, her body completely free of dust.

"It's completely collapsed," she concluded flatly.

For a moment Klein was speechless and could only smile.

Following that, the two of them simultaneously looked to the left where the ajar stone door was. There was a tiny crack.

Klein went closer and carefully looked through the three centimeter gap.

His Spirit Vision, which had originally been blocked by the stone door, immediately discovered something.

There were at least four bright and powerful spiritual lights inside, two that were close to dark gold in color, and two that were dark blue like the sea.

After using his Spirit Vision, a "narrow" scene appeared in Klein's normal vision.

The firelight that entered the room illuminated the black stone tiles. On top of the tiles were piles of bones covered with rotten clothing, and a few of them emitted dark gold and dark blue light.

Condensed Beyonder characteristics? Mystical items? As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Klein swept his gaze to the ends of the room.

Along the dark wall stood a bifold door.

A bloody pair of bifold doors!

There seemed to remnants of fresh blood on the door. They continued sliding down as they reflected the light.

Klein had wanted to let Miss Bodyguard scout the way ahead when he suddenly felt a change in Azik's copper whistle that he was holding in his hand!

The originally cold and mild whistle suddenly became bone-piercing. It was a profound feeling of death!

*This… *Klein narrowed his eyes and instinctively took a step back.

Then, he noticed that his right forearm was numb and itchy and that it was beginning to swell.

A scene flashed through his mind as he immediately took out a tarot card with his left hand and slashed across his arm.

What surged out from his wound wasn't blood, but tiny black squirming worms!

Sizzle!

When these worms fell to the ground, they eroded into smoke.

They struggled and huddled, but in the end, they melted under the glow of the lanterns.

After a few seconds, all the black worms in Klein's wound finally flowed out, leaving only crimson liquid.

He wriggled his muscles to control the small wound and prevented the blood from flowing further.

Miss Bodyguard watched this scene quietly, her pretty eyebrows creasing into a rarely seen frown.

Klein was just about to speak when he discovered the coldness and deadliness of Azik's copper whistle hadn't abated.

At the same time, his gaze landed on Miss Bodyguard's shadow.

She never had a shadow to begin with!

"Run!" Klein shouted and immediately ran towards the hall.

Miss Bodyguard quickly floated up, and the two of them saw the lantern light in front of them gradually being swallowed up by a black shadow.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Klein ran like a hurricane as fast as he could while the light around him faded away.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

The shadow grew bigger and bigger, closer and closer, thicker and thicker. The light from the flame was about to be completely engulfed, and at that moment, the door was still a few meters away.

At that moment, Klein instinctively rushed forward and then rolled across the stone door.

The light from the fire suddenly brightened, and the uneasiness in his heart instantly disappeared. Azik's copper whistle also returned to its mild and cold state.

Miss Bodyguard floated beside him as she turned around and looked at the passageway which had once again sunk into darkness. She said with an uncertain tone, "Evil spirit…”

Evil spirit? Klein almost drew a deep breath when he heard that. Fortunately, as a Clown, he was good at controlling his expression and reactions.

In the field of mysticism, evil spirits were extremely terrifying monsters. The best of them could even be said to be on the same level as High-Sequence Beyonders!

An evil spirit is wandering within this ancient structure? For some reason, it's bound or imprisoned within that room? Hmm… If it was an evil spirit, that explains why Mr. Azik's copper whistle responded. An evil spirit can be considered as an undead creature… Klein stood up and also looked at the path which was now submerged in darkness. He felt as if there was a pair of cold eyes staring at him!

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CHAPTER 262
DREAM

In the cold and gloomy hall, Klein suddenly shivered. He retracted his gaze and said to Miss Bodyguard, "Let's return."

From the way Azik's copper whistle reacted, it's likely that the room contains a terrifying evil spirit. Its danger level is highly likely to be above that of Nimblewright Master Rosago and Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos… It's been roaming these confines for centuries to thousands of years. Perhaps it's already equivalent to a High-Sequence Beyonder. If it wasn't for its experiencing difficulties in letting its powers escape the room, I would already be dead… Even if Miss Bodyguard is a powerful Sequence 5, there's no hope of us turning the tides of battle with our powers combined… One needs to be aware of one's strength. I cannot be enticed by the suspected Beyonder characteristics and mystical items left in there… Greed often leads to death… Klein silently came up with a reason to convince himself.

Miss Bodyguard turned her head to look at him. Without much emotion in her eyes, she asked, "What happens next?"

Next? Klein silently gritted his teeth and said with deliberation, "Let Millet Carter get the police. Who knows when this evil spirit will escape. It's best to finish it as soon as possible. No, that won't work. Mr. Carter doesn't know enough. By informing the police this way, the police department won't pay enough attention to it. The first batch of people who come to explore this place will suffer heavy casualties, and they might even indirectly help the evil spirit escape from its restraints. Also, for me to see these statues, a detective like me might be silenced… Uh… Did you see the bones and spiritual light in the room?"

Miss Bodyguard once again cast her gaze towards the dark path behind the ajar stone door, and very slightly nodded her head.

Klein thought quickly and said, "My guess is that these are the corpses of the explorers from before. They were killed by the evil spirit in that room, and one of the Beyonders left behind some mystical items. This might have had something to do with the viscount family that lived beyond this premises. I plan to inquire about their last names, go to the library, and look for information about their descendants. Perhaps, I might gain some valuable clues.

"After coming to a preliminary confirmation of the situation, I'll make a choice based on the severity of the situation. I might get some explosives, destroy the door, or send an anonymous letter to the police, detailing the existence of the evil spirit. However, I'll have to think of a way to avoid the risk ahead of time.

"This isn't too urgent. I can take my time."

Miss Bodyguard quietly listened to what Klein had to say. Looking ahead, she said in an ethereal voice, "Are you not considering to get people to exorcise this evil spirit?

"Even if there were no mystical items left behind, the remains after the evil spirit dissipates are still precious enough."

It's the first time I've seen you talk so much… Probably… Klein replied without hesitation, "The risk is too high. I think my life and health are more important."

He organized his words and added, "The most powerful person I know is you. And from your performance just now, you don't seem to be a match for that evil spirit. I can't imagine any other way of finishing it, other than calling the police."

Miss Bodyguard turned around, her pale face somewhat translucent.

"You still have some sense," she commented calmly, then drifted toward the exit of the ancient hall.

Other than being suspected to be under the True Creator's influence, in what way do I look like a madman? Klein silently lampooned. He held the lantern and cane and followed behind Miss Bodyguard. Throughout the entire process, he felt as if he was being watched by the cold eyes of the dark corridor.

It was only when they walked out of the stone door that suffused an ancient aura did the feeling suddenly disappear.

Klein turned around and closed the door, sealing the inverted candlesticks, scuffed marks, and the creepy statues of the six deities, allowing them to continue their thousand-year-long "slumber" in that unchanging darkness and silence.

Patting the dust off his clothes, he switched the lantern in his other hand and hurried back to Millet Carter's basement. As for Miss Bodyguard, she had disappeared into thin air as usual.

Millet Carter was pacing about in the basement. When he saw Klein exit, he hurriedly asked, "How is it? What's the situation inside?"

Klein had long thought of an excuse as he said with an expression of fear, "Terrible, there are a lot of snakes in there, and many spots have collapsed. I plan to gather some information, gather some manpower, and once preparations are done, do another round of exploration. During this period of time, it's best that you don't send anyone in. Believe me, there are more venomous snakes in there than you can imagine."

Millet drew a gasp and asked in fear, "Will they slither out?

"Do you know any experts that can deal with the snakes?"

Klein immediately nodded. "I'll get people to help and try my best to deal with this matter. It's the cold autumn now, and the snakes aren't willing to move. As long as you don't send anyone to disturb them, nothing will happen."

"Okay, please hurry. I'll close this door and prevent anyone from entering." Hearing that, Millet relaxed a little.

When Klein saw that his employer was truly intimidated by what he said, he quickly put down the lantern, nudged his gold-rimmed spectacles and said, "Next up, I'll gather some information. I'll first gain a preliminary understanding of the layout of the underground structure before I explore it again.

"That requires you to tell me which viscount was the original owner of this house."

Millet had bought this building precisely because it was an estate of a former noble, so he answered immediately, "Viscount Pound."

"What do you know about him and his family?" Klein asked in a professional manner.

Millet pondered and said, "Not much. I only know that he won his aristocratic title in the Battle of the Violated Oath. It once enjoyed an illustrious period, but decades later, suddenly declined due to unknown reasons. The family kept losing its heirs, causing it to eventually have to seek out distant relatives to keep the aristocratic title. And the new Viscount Pound is, heh heh. He squandered most of the family's fortune, and he was demoted to baronet by the king. He's probably still in Backlund and can go bankrupt at any moment."

Battle of the Violated Oath? The Battle of the Violated Oath that began in 738 during the Fifth Epoch? Having successfully graduated as a history student, Klein instinctively recalled the corresponding knowledge.

The war that happened about six centuries ago was a war involving religion. The southern Feynapotter Kingdom originally believed in both Mother Earth and the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, but due to some influencing factors, the two churches began to be at odds with each other, and their believers often clashed.

During that period, its two neighbors in the north, the Loen Kingdom and the Intis Kingdom, seized the opportunity to start a war in the name of protecting freedom of religion. In the later stages of the war, the Feysac Empire joined the fray and attempted to destroy the ploy by Loen and Intis. However, they still failed to turn the situation around.

The result of the war was that the border between Leon and Feynapotter, as well as Intis and Feynapotter, countries such as Lenburg, Masin, and Segar, gained independence. They mainly believed in the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, leaving the Church of Mother Earth as the only religion in the Feynapotter Kingdom.

The conflict that lasted five years was called the Battle of the Violated Oath because both sides of the war accused their adversaries of violating the Holy Oath at the end of the Fourth Epoch.

After that, there was more than 300 years of peace in the Northern Continent. This didn't mean that there was no conflict between nations, but rather, there were no wars on that scale again. It lasted until Roselle invented the steam engine and improved the sailboats and artillery.

This is the information recorded in the history textbooks… Thinking about it now, since it involved faith, there must've been some Beyonders from the Church involved. There must've been an intense Beyonder war… However, it's said that that era was a period with few Beyonders… Squadron battles? Could the Pound family's sudden waning and continuous loss of heirs, which happened decades ago, have something to do with the discovery of the ancient structure underground? Klein thoughtfully asked, "Do you know where Baronet Pound currently lives?"

"I'm sorry, I don't know." Millet shook his head slightly.

Klein asked a few more questions, but seeing that he couldn't get any more information, he bade farewell and returned to 15 Minsk Street.

It was almost five in the afternoon and the sky was as dark as the night. Klein thought that the public libraries would've be closed by then, so he temporarily put aside the underground structure and prepared dinner for himself.

He had wanted to learn to make Feynapotter noodles based on a recipe in the newspapers, but he ended up with noodles mixed in meat, sauce, and vegetables. To his surprise, it tasted pretty good.

After having had his fill, Klein tossed a coin casually, divining if he should inform the police. He received a negative answer.

…

The Backlund evening was as serene as other cities, at least in Cherwood Borough.

Klein was sleeping soundly, wandering through different dreams in an adrift manner when he suddenly realized, with a jolt, that he was dreaming.

Someone is invading my dreams? Klein resisted the urge to frown and pretended to look around in confusion.

He found himself in a scorching yellow desert.

A roar suddenly came from the sky, and a huge monster dyed in black and gold flew over.

The creature had a thick, lizard-like body and a pair of wide wings covered in a hide on its back. It descended and blotted out the sun in the sky.

*A dragon! A powerful dragon! *Klein saw scales the size of a plate, a gaping mouth that emitted pure light, and two dark golden vertical pupils.

Roar!

The dragon spat out a beam of light that seemed to envelop everything. Soon, large swaths of the desert was obliterated.

Amid the light, a figure jumped into the air.

He was three or four meters tall, but he didn't have the unique vertical eye of the giants. He had a handsome, young face, and he wore black full-body armor which seemed to be spattered with blood.

This giant knight swung his broadsword upwards and countless bluish-white flames, which appeared a little purple, condensed into long spears. They shot at the dragon. It was as if he had an entire army of illusory Beyonders helping him in battle!

In the midst of the meteor shower, the giant knight leaped onto the head of the dragon, and he swung his sword down.

The afterimages he had created earlier instantly overlapped, and the sword rays turned into intersecting lightning.

Pow!

The ground shook wildly, and the dragon fell, splattering its dark gold blood.

At that moment, the scene changed to a huge bloody door. It was the same bloody door that Klein had seen in the ancient structure that very afternoon.

With a creak, the bloody door opened a crack, allowing him to catch a glimpse of a black high back chair.

A man of normal height sat on the high back chair. He had his head lowered, silent and deathly still.

As his vision got closer and closer, Klein saw the man's clothes clearly. He seemed to be the knight that had just killed the dragon, and he was still wearing the black armor that was stained with blood!

The only difference was that he was no longer three or four meters tall.

At this moment, the man suddenly raised his head. His handsome, young face had terrifying signs of decay; his eyes ice-cold and emotionless.

Klein jumped in fright and awoke from his dream. Opening his eyes, he saw the crimson moonlight shining through the curtains.

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CHAPTER 263
SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION AND ATTEMPT

Under the dim crimson moonlight, Klein pulled back his blanket and got up.

For a Seer, putting weight on dreams was a basic requirement, and the dream he just had could never be dismissed as a simple nightmare.

Dressed in relatively comfortable clothes, he came before the full-body mirror and said in a low voice, "I dreamed of the blood-stained door in that room."

Miss Bodyguard's figure slowly outlined itself above the mirror. She replied expressionlessly, "The influence of the evil spirit's aura.

"It will gradually weaken until it disappears."

Is that so… Klein nodded slightly and returned to the side of the bed. He picked up the gold pocket watch and popped it open.

Seeing that it was still early, he lay back down to sleep. This time, he no longer encountered the same dream as before.

Sunday morning the next day, in high spirits, Klein made himself a soft-boiled egg to go with buttered bread.

In the Loen Kingdom, or rather in the countries of the Northern Continent, it was a must for gentlemen to read the newspapers at breakfast, and Klein

was no exception. He opened up the newspapers he subscribed to—the Tussock Times, Backlund Morning Post, and Backlund Bulletin.

"The Civil Servant Unified Examination Bill has been officially passed by the House of Lords. The first examination will be held in early December, and the second examination will be held at the end of January next year. The final interview will be held two weeks after that… Within a week, the government will announce the positions and requirements involved in this exam and begin the registration process… Reporters surmise that most of it will be held in Backlund…" Klein scanned the contents, picked up his cup, and sipped his Sibe black tea.

He couldn't help but think of Benson and thought to himself, *The bill is passed at the end of September. The positions will be announced in the beginning of October, and registrations will be completed by early November. The examinations will start at the beginning of December… The timing is tight and very unreasonable. That implies how much of a rush the King and the Prime Minister is in to have this enacted.*

But that's advantageous for Benson. He prepared two months ahead of everyone else; even if he can't compare to the elite graduates of the universities, he would definitely be able to beat most of his competition, and the positions the elites are aiming for wouldn't clash with his.

He should be fine…

Klein wanted to tap his chest four times to draw out a crimson moon and say "May the Goddess bless him," but then he remembered that Miss Bodyguard was nearby and resisted the urge. After all, he had claimed to be a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery.

After finishing his last mouthful of bread, he continued reading the papers.

"Both Houses have passed the National Atmospheric Pollution Council bill, allowing the government to set up such an organization… The coming

month will be a critical period for the various parties to become a member of the council…”

“*…An independent Alkali Industry Public Prosecutor has been approved with the goal of minimizing the pollution levels in acid and alkali factories."*

“*…The fifth page doesn't have an advertisement for the purchase of goods from the Ernst Firm. There's no need to consider participating in the Beyonder gathering tomorrow night…”*

…

Tingen City, 2 Daffodil Street.

Benson read and reread the news in the papers, forgetting the bread on his plate.

"The Civil Servant Unified Examination Bill was passed?" Dressed in a long, black dress, Melissa looked at her brother who was acting oddly.

The newspapers from the past few days had been playing up the bill that would be passed this time.

Benson finally put down the newspaper, wiped his black hair, and exhaled slowly.

"Yes."

At this moment, the two of them suddenly fell into silence. The room was completely silent, it even lacked the sound of knives and forks colliding with the dining plates.

The indescribable atmosphere was broken by Bella, the maid who came out of the kitchen. Benson smiled and said, "This is foreseeable. Actually, the most important thing is the previous piece of news."

"Oh?" Melissa's expression was unusually quiet.

Benson took a bite of his bread and smiled.

"The news that the Backlund Polytechnic will be restructured into a university.

"It'll formally accept students next year. It won't need tests on grammar and classical literature, but will instead focus on the technical aspects. It's very suitable for graduates and students of technical schools everywhere.

"Melissa, I think you can try."

"But…" Melissa subconsciously retorted.

Benson interrupted her with a smile.

"Its tuition will be half as cheap as the Tingen, Perth, Kboy, and Backlund and the other universities. It's equivalent to the Constant Industry University in Midseashire, and there will be even more opportunities for scholarships. Melissa, don't you like machinery, steam, and this stuff? This is the best opportunity for you to have access to much advanced and deeper knowledge.

"Give it a try, how about it? Don't worry about wasting money. Although th-that money can allow us to maintain our present lives without working, we're still young. We must not define our lives like this. As you can see, compared to a few months ago, my grammar has improved a lot.

"Eh… It might be better if we change environments.

"I know you can't bear to part with Tingen and this place. Well, we'll come back eventually, but not when we're young."

Melissa looked at the various components on the tea table as her lips moved a few times and she said, "What about Bella…"

After Klein's death, she didn't want to hire any more maidservants, but when she thought of how tragic Bella's life would be after she lost her job, she gave up on the idea. After all, the extra expense of 5 soli a week was already nothing to the Moretti family, which had an annuity of at least three hundred pounds.

To this, Benson shook his head and laughed.

"There are still a few more months before that happens. We can let Bella find a new job ahead of time. Before that, we will continue to pay her and provide her with a bedroom. Furthermore, her cooking skills are much better than before, so she can apply to be a chef at someone's home. It's a pity… Heh heh. Of course, everything depends on the premise that you can pass the entrance exams at Backlund's University of Technology."

He had wanted to say that it was a pity that Bella didn't have much time to learn how to cook, but after looking at Melissa's gloomy expression, he forcefully changed the topic.

Before Melissa could say anything, Benson smiled and touched his hair.

"I'm planning on resigning tomorrow and will focus on preparing for the exam. Most of the positions are said to be in Backlund. That's my goal. I hope we can go there together."

Melissa was silent for a moment before she slowly nodded her head.

At the same time, she put down her fork and knife, wiped her mouth with a napkin, and said, "I'm going to the bathroom."

"Alright." Benson watched his sister leave the dining table, and the smile that had been plastered over his face rapidly vanished.

He took out the silver pocket watch with the vine-leaf patterns, took a close look at it, and sighed very quietly.

…

During the whole of Sunday, Klein busied himself with the public libraries in the Cherwood Borough in search of information related to Viscount Pound, but the viscount's family didn't have a single biography, nor did it arouse the interest of any historian to conduct a special study.

They were scattered across the annals of history, and Klein, who had no "search" function to use, felt a throbbing pain in his head as he faced the vast collection of books and essays.

He spent six hours browsing through a lot of information, but failed to find any useful information.

I have to find someone who has a deep knowledge of the history of the nobility. Or I have to bribe someone in the police department to get the address of Baronet Pound. He's an aristocrat, and the police department must have a corresponding record, and there aren't many aristocrats. When Klein got home, he stood in front of the mirror and talked to the air.

The surface of the mirror quickly outlined Miss Bodyguard's Gothic regal dress and the black bonnet on her head.

She nodded slightly, as if agreeing with Klein.

She then suddenly spoke out in a dreamy voice, "The employment period is over."

I know, the three days are up… Klein thought for a moment and asked, "If I can obtain some clues about the Pound family, would you like to know?"

Miss Bodyguard didn't answer but gave a slight nod.

"Um… through Maric?" Klein asked.

After nodding her head again, Miss Bodyguard bent down, lifted up her skirt, and bowed.

Her figure quickly disappeared, and the reflection in the mirror was no longer anything special.

Klein looked around and didn't relax as a result of that. He proceeded systematically to prepare dinner and fill his stomach.

He waited until it was late in the night before returning to his bedroom and drew back the curtains. Then, he took out the iron cigarette case and reached out to touch Rosago's All-Black Eye.

A series of illusory roars immediately rampaged through his mind, seeming to tear apart his mind and destroy his thoughts.

With great difficulty, Klein resisted the pain which was making his head explode. Once again, he saw the black threads spreading out from different parts of his body.

They were densely packed and illusory, reaching out endlessly.

He quickly released his grip to escape from the negative influence. After nearly a minute, everything returned to normal.

Phew, I can finally go up to the gray fog and verify the spiritual perception I had before… Klein silently said to himself as he quickly set up the ritual, summoned himself, and responded to himself.

Then, in his spirit form, he carried Azik's copper whistle, picked up the iron cigarette case, and returned above the gray fog.

Klein sat at seat of honor at the ancient long table, using his fingers to create spiritual flames and burning the bloodstained documents in the corner and any other items that were no longer needed.

When he was done, he opened the iron cigarette case and was surprised to find that the All-Black Eye had become silent, no longer showing any signs of madness, but that corruptive influence was still settling within. It just wasn't active, as if it was in hibernation.

"As expected, it's impossible to separate them directly…" Klein muttered. Following that, on the other side of the ancient table, a man in a hooded robe appeared.

Just like his previous attempt to create a clone, this man was stiff and lifeless. It was obvious that he wasn't someone real at a glance. There was no way he could deceive the members of the Tarot Club.

However, Klein already had an idea regarding this.

He extended his hand and held the All-Black Eye. There was silence in his ears, and there were no longer any terrifying howls.

Using the amassed Beyonder characteristic, he could see that there were also black threads floating out from the fake body opposite him.

Soon after, Klein carefully let his spirituality spread out through the All-Black Eye, touching a few of the illusory threads.

All of a sudden, he felt like he was holding onto something.

With a thought from him, the fake person raised his hand.

*It worked! I can use the ability of the Nimblewright Master to create a fake Tarot Club member! However, this is draining on me. I'm unable to maintain a second one… Hmm, the symbol on the back of the chair won't change accordingly, but it's not like Miss Justice and the rest can see it… *Klein happily practiced, over and over again, even learning how to manipulate his clone's throat and mouth to let him speak.

When his spirituality was almost exhausted, he smiled and said to the fake person in front of him, "Welcome, new member. Which tarot card do you wish to draw?"

After saying that, he closed his mouth. The fake person opposite him lifted his hand to stroke his chin as he laughed hoarsely, "World!

"I choose the card 'World.'"

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CHAPTER 264
A FIVE-PERSON GATHERING

If "The Fool" signified the beginning of the tarot club, then "The World" signified the end, a perfect ending of a cycle and sublimation. Klein had named his smurf "The World" because he hoped that it would lead to a beautiful beginning and end.

*In the future, I'll be able to make The World make requests or do things that wouldn't be convenient for me. This will greatly reduce the possibility that my image as Mr. Fool will collapse. With an alt, no—a smurf truly is what makes life complete! *Klein sighed in relief and waved The World away.

Following that, he spread out his spirituality, wrapped himself, and stimulated a descent into the gray fog and returned to the real world.

He had left Rosago's All-Black Eye above the gray fog. After all, he couldn't usually use the "item" anyway, and he had to constantly worry about having it discovered by others or losing it.

After putting away the summoning ritual materials, Klein looked up towards the crimson moonlight that passed through the curtains, filled with anticipation for tomorrow's gathering.

When it came to understanding the aristocracy, he believed that Miss Justice would definitely surpass 99% of the people of Leon.

And with his smurf, The World, he could directly ask her about the Pound family without worrying about affecting his image as a The Fool!

Of course, this had to be done in a more tactful manner. After all, Detective Sherlock Moriarty was also looking for information on the Pound family, and only with enough information would he be able to perform a divination above the gray fog.

Phew… Klein thought hard for a while before he relaxed and fell asleep.

After entering the gray fog, it was as though the remnants of the evil spirit's aura had completely disappeared. Klein slept until dawn, but he didn't see the sun because of the thin fog outside.

He continued as planned, heading to the rest of the public libraries in Backlund, but he no longer queried the librarians nor did he mention the Pound family. He only leafed through the materials concerning the nobility by himself.

At twenty minutes to three in the afternoon, Klein entered the mysterious space above the gray fog ahead of time.

Inside the vast and ancient palace, he sat down at the seat belonging to The Fool. He conjured the fake World on the opposite side of the mottled bronze table as he familiarized himself with operating The World.

After a few minutes, Klein took out his pocket watch and glanced at it, sending a message to the crimson star that symbolized The Sun to prepare for the gathering.

While he waited, he played with the All-Black Eye and "fitted" it with a silver chain. Then, he wound it around his right wrist and covered it with his sleeve.

At three in the afternoon, rays of light shot out from the palace that resembled a giant's residence. Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun, each projected a blurry silhouette dyed in crimson.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fool~ Good afternoon…" Audrey was about to greet every member of the Tarot Club when her gaze suddenly fell upon the figure seated at the very end.

It was a stranger wearing a hooded black robe. He was also illusory and hazy.

"This is?" Audrey looked at Mr. Fool with both puzzlement and delight.

Has the Tarot Club grown bigger again?

Is it Fors or Xio? No, the height doesn't match. Is it someone else?

While Audrey was deep in thought, Klein leisurely leaned back and said, "This is a new member, Mr. World."

At the same time, through his gray fog-augmented Spirit Vision, he discovered that the surface color of The Sun's Astral Projection had become a little purer, but it had yet to reach the standards of Sequence 8. His initial judgment was that The Sun had completely digested the Bard potion.

"Hello," Audrey greeted politely, curiously scrutinizing the new member.

She quickly "read" some of the corresponding details through the hazy fog.

Mr. World is a person who is reserved. He seldom moves and always wears a straight face. I wonder where he's from. Loen? Intis? Or a place as mysterious as the City of Silver? Audrey nodded thoughtfully.

After so many gatherings, she had deduced one thing from the fact that The Sun couldn't engage in their conversations; that was, that he was most likely not speaking the Loen language and that the information that he heard was most likely translated by Mr. Fool.

After The Hanged Man, Alger, and The Sun, Derrick, greeted The World respectively, to which the newcomer gave a rather cold response, Klein

looked at Justice and said, "The two candidates you have nominated are still under examination.

"I'll give you a simple task. You can entrust it to them in your name. This is part of the examination."

It should be this strict… Not only was Audrey not disappointed, she even felt that it was only necessary.

The members of the Tarot Club must be strictly selected; not just anyone can become one! She thought proudly before adding in a somewhat guilty tone, And for me to be pulled in by Mr. Fool at the very beginning shows that I was lucky, and luck is a unique quality as well!

"Alright, please issue the mission," Audrey gave an affirmative answer.

Klein stretched out his right hand and placed it on the table, showing a picture of Lanevus and his dressing.

"Investigate the man in the painting. He's in Backlund." Klein had the portrait appear in front of Miss Justice.

Audrey looked over and saw a young man with neatly combed black hair and round glasses. He had a full forehead.

It was a colored oil painting, with taunting brown eyes that seemed abnormally protruded, and at the bottom were the words "formerly known alias: Lanevus" and other information.

It's a simple mission, which means that the target isn't strong… However, there must be something special about him that makes Mr. Fool aware of his existence… Although it's a simple mission, there might be a deeper purpose behind it… For someone as powerful as him, it shouldn't just be a test… Audrey momentarily allowed her to throng her mind. Only after a few seconds did she say, "I'll entrust it to them."

Hmm… The two ladies seem to have many connections in Backlund which would serve to help in finding Lanevus. After confirming the matters pertaining to his revenge, Klein fell silent, and he deliberately allowed his smurf to take center stage.

The World surveyed the area and spoke with a hoarse voice, "Mr. Fool told me that I can issue missions and gather ingredients here, is that so?"

"Yes," Audrey elegantly nodded and said. "However, you need to wait patiently. What's going to happen next is Mr. Fool's reading time."

I completed my mission to "assassinate Intis Ambassador Bakerland," but I didn't even mention it to occupy this period of time… she thought, raising her chin slightly.

Miss Justice, you really have a great sense of mastership… I'll have to pay the price of knowledge later so that the assassination of Bakerland can truly come to an end… Klein looked away, amused, and looked over at The Hanged Man.

Alger Wilson didn't speak blindly because of the appearance of a new member. He remained silent and observed in secret.

At this moment, when he saw Mr. Fool looking at him, he quickly and humbly bowed and said, "This time, there are still six pages. The final page will be given to you next time."

"Sure." Klein nodded.

The Hanged Man quickly focused his mind, recalled the contents, and expressed them with his mind.

He quickly finished "writing" six pages of the diary and saw them suddenly vanish and appear in Klein's hands.

Klein looked down and swept through the contents of the first page.

"9th February. I have a third child. I named him Bornova.

"My eldest daughter, Bernadette, was lucky. Her mother and I were just Low-Sequence Beyonders back then. She is free to choose the path she wants to take.

"My eldest son, Ciel, is the most unfortunate. He inherited a minute amount of Beyonder characteristics, but he has to follow my path. Perhaps, he could make changes at Sequence 4, but attaining High Sequences are never easy.

"My second son, Bornova, was born between Bernadette and Ciel. I have his characteristics equivalent to a Sequence 5 Beyonder. This has reduced the burden on me, allowing me to digest my potion even faster, accelerating my advancement. And when he was just born, he was already showing various traits of an Astromancer.

"Zaratul came to congratulate me in secret and praised Bornova as a lovely angel. I asked this master of divination what he would accomplish in the future. He only smiled and didn't answer me.

"When I asked him about Ciel's future, he finally said that death is an inevitable ending, but that might be a good thing.

"Seriously, a Seer's words are always so vague that it makes one want to pry their mouths open.

"When I finally asked about Bernadette's future, he suddenly became very serious. He said she would hate me, detest me, turn her back on me, and she would become an important figure in the mysterious world.

"Sometimes, you really shouldn't ask about the result of a divination. I find it hard to believe that my adorable and kind Bernadette who cares for her brother, adores her father, and pampers her mother would hate me and betray me. Why would that happen? What excessive act did I do? Maybe she'll have someone she loves but I'm not satisfied with. Some punk that I'll end up killing?

"No, Zaratul isn't a Soothsayer, and the divination he receives might be wrong! Forget it, Roselle!"

I think I smell the scent of some contrived family melodrama… After reading the first page of the diary, Klein couldn't help but lampoon silently.

At the same time, he naturally recalled what Zaratul had told him about the future of Bernadette: an important figure in the mysterious world.

Was this referring to the world of the Beyonders? What level would someone be deemed an important figure… Klein turned the pages thoughtfully.

"22nd May. Floren of the Sauron family actually wants me to be his subordinate!

"Do I look like someone who would be a lackey? His attitude is simply unacceptable.

"I swear that I'll one day make him pay the price for his arrogance today.

"However, some of the things he mentioned are very interesting and worth pondering over."

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CHAPTER 265
CARDS OF BLASPHEMY

"Floren said that the history of the Sauron family exceeds two thousand years, making it longer than even the Church of the God of Craftsmanship's history. They witnessed all the cooperation and strife, light and darkness, in the Fourth Epoch, and they have survived until this very day. Other than the Augustus family of Loen, the Einhorn family of Feysac, and the Castiya family of Feynapotter, the other powerful families that have been deemed their equal, such as the Antigonus family and the Zaratul family, have been relegated as vestiges of history, or have turned to nothing but rats in the sewers, hiding from the public as shady existences.

"He said that making me his subordinate—a subordinate of the ancient and glorious Sauron family—is a gift to me.

"Back then, I wanted to f**k all eight generations of his ancestors.

"However, for the Sauron family to have a history exceeding two thousand years is indeed surprising. The Fourth Epoch is known as the Epoch of the Gods. Be it the seven orthodox deities of the present times, or Death, Primordial Demoness, Dark Side of the Universe, and the True Creator, they all remained active in the real world. Legend had it that they frequently did miracles. For the Sauron family to last to this day and enjoy its current high standing, it's definitely not an easy matter.

"Their long history has given them far more than just arrogance. They must be hiding many secrets, and perhaps even extremely terrifying Sealed Artifacts.

"They are truly a colossus that stands tall above the earth, one that people can't look straight at."

Upon reading this, Klein had a lot of ideas.

For Roselle to be able to overthrow the rule of the Sauron family, he must have experienced a horrifying and heart-stirring struggle. Even if the Sauron family didn't have a Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts, they definitely had no lack of Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts. Adding to the possibility of having High-Sequence Beyonders, even if the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery fully supported Roselle, it's unlikely that any good outcome might come out of it… Could it be that before all of that happened, the Sauron family was already beginning to wane and weaken, and the Intis revolution was just an external manifestation of this state?

What did they experience during that period of time?

Did they lose Sealed Artifacts? Did the High-Sequence Beyonders die? Did that attract the attention of many ambitious people?

Hmm… Judging from this diary, the Augustus family of Loen is no stranger to the Antigonus and Zaratul families. Internally, they should have corresponding records.

The Sun had previously mentioned that the City of Silver has endured for more than 2500 years in the Dark Ages. According to my initial judgment, that's the date of the Cataclysm. In the past two hundred years, the Sauron family claimed to have a history spanning more than 2000 years. I wonder if it will extend to the point before the City of Silver… I'll try to find an opportunity to mention the Sauron clan and see The Sun's reaction. If The Sun still has a look of stupefaction, it would indirectly mean that the Sauron family only rose up after the Cataclysm. Perhaps they had benefited greatly from the Cataclysm to become nobles in the Fourth Epoch, and royalty in the Fifth Epoch…

Well, even if the Sun doesn't know, it doesn't prove it completely. Perhaps he didn't learn his history well.

When Klein turned to the third page, he found that the content should've been written in the early days of Roselle's appointment as Consul of the Intis Republic.

From the diary entries on this page, it can be seen that Roselle had developed and promulgated a new Civil Code which encouraged inventions, protected trade, and the incubation of the industrial revolution. It wasn't him merely satisfying his own warped humor of acting as this world's Napoleon and his ambition to change the world. What he did allowed him to reconcile with the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

The Eternal Blazing Sun was also the God of Deeds, the Guardian of Businesses. The closer to the times the Civil Code was and the more prosperous trade was made it more in line with the needs of the church.

Judging from this part of the diary, the relationship between Roselle and the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun was gradually thawing and beginning to improve. When he brazenly claimed the title of Emperor more than ten years later and called himself Caesar, it's likely that he obtained the simultaneous endorsement of the two Churches. Otherwise, it would've been too risky. Then, what resulted in his assassination? Klein cast his gaze at the fourth page in puzzlement.

"11th August. That retard Floren is showing off again.

"He said that he's the most promising member of the Sauron family generation to become a High-Sequence Beyonder because he's very similar to his great-great-grandfather.

"Is there any necessary connection? I looked him up and down, left and right, but I couldn't find any sign of talent.

"Moreover, in the field of Beyonders, is talent important? Well, figuring out the essence to 'acting' can be a core element of talent, but that's not necessary. As long as one knows the acting method and not be stupid enough to misunderstand the meaning, or avoid doing things that easily result in a loss of control, then one has a chance to completely digest the potions. Which is to say, just a bit more time and effort needs to be spent. In one's lifetime, it's not impossible to become a High-Sequence Beyonder.

"The main obstacle to becoming a High-Sequence Beyonder is the difficulty of obtaining Beyonder ingredients and the difficulty of corresponding rituals. Of course, I have to admit that those born as Beyonders have more time to prepare.

"Was Floren's great-great-grandfather a High-Sequence Beyonder? Does looking like him imply talent?"

It can be seen that at the time of writing this diary entry, Roselle was still very young and that he wasn't aware of the two Laws of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility and Conservation… Klein nodded indiscernibly.

With his current knowledge, he could probably understand the hidden meaning behind Floren Sauron's words.

A High-Sequence Beyonder's Beyonder characteristic remains contained a spirit mark. This was also one of the reasons why it was easy for people to lose control when concocting potions with this ingredient.

And people who resembled the original owner could avoid this negative influence to the greatest extent. Their chances of success were higher than the average person, so they were considered gifted. How Holy Artifacts recognized their masters probably shared the same conditions.

This achieves the same goal via different approaches as the acting method, but it can't be popularized… Once the advancement is successful, one would still have to do the acting method required of the potion to

completely digest its characteristics.… While in deep thought, Klein glanced at the two diary entries at the back of the page and discovered how much Emperor Roselle enjoyed the liberalness in Intis, but he was worried that his future wife would be equally liberal.

With the paper making some noise, Klein placed the fifth page at the top.

"20th April. I participated in that ancient organization's secret gathering once again. Those members still leave me shaking. It's hard to believe that they're actually all members of this organization.

"This time, I learned some of the ancient organization's philosophy. They believe that people will always lose some of their individuality bit by bit until they 'sleep.' Hence, by trying hard to observe and remember oneself, one can use the various types of information to achieve the purification needed to face the final end of days.

"They've kept and passed down secrets for thousands or even tens of thousands of years. They believe that dusk is inevitable, and that doomsday cannot be avoided.

"They believe in the original Creator and believe that He is not truly dead. When dusk comes and everything ends, He will wake up from His slumber and let everything return to Him. He will create a new world, a new history.

"All of the actions from this organization stem from this belief. It can be said that they show great animosity to the True Creator. They aren't stingy with their descriptions to describe Him as fallen and evil.

"They wield the second Blasphemy Slate and the twenty-two paths of the divine, but they only allow members to choose a few of them, with the exception of those who were already Beyonders when they joined.

"Are there any secrets to these pathways?

"I'll first jot it down and analyze it in the future. These pathways are Bard, Sailor, Reader, and Spectator.

"Haha, I have to change my habits of calling these Sequence pathways in the future. Using those names in that ancient organization makes me appear quite uneducated.

This is very similar to what I've analyzed from my hostile relations and from Mr. A's request, with it being very similar to how the Bard, Sailor, Reader, and Secrets Suppliant pathways can be exchanged at Sequence 4… Is Manipulator a High Sequence of the Spectator pathway? Why do many secret organizations declare that the apocalypse would definitely befall us one day? For example, the Demoness Sect, this ancient organization, and they themselves do not rely on this to proselytize. Is it a requirement for brainwashing or would there really be a so-called dusk? Klein thought of many things, but due to a lack of information, he was unable to come to a definite answer.

At the same time, he couldn't help but silently lampoon, *Roselle, can't you just write down the name of that organization?*

Resisting the changes in his expression and body movements, Klein turned to the last page which had relatively little content and read.

"1st Jan. A beginning of a new year. I happened to finish my first Card of Blasphemy.

"I will hide the ultimate secret of the twenty-two paths of the divine in these different Cards of Blasphemy and scatter them across the world. If things fail, they'll be the best insurance that my children can fall back onto.

"Haha, I'll disrupt the order they wish to have and spread the profound mysteries of the divine!

"These Cards of Blasphemy will possess characteristics of being anti-divination and anti-prophecy. Apart from the ones I'm giving my children,

the fated ones will receive it!

"I'm a person who makes sure to square accounts when it comes to grudges, and after I die, who cares if floods deluge the heavens! Oh, I didn't create that sentence.

"In short, the more chaotic the world is, the better it is!

"I have to consider how to name the Cards of Blasphemy that will form a set. The paths of the divine number twenty-two. The Major Arcana tarot cards also have twenty-two cards. They can match quite well, but there are a few that don't meet the requirements. I need to make some changes to match the original potion names.

"That ancient organization is my last and biggest insurance. I don't know if they'll support me, or the manner in which they'll support me in.

"I still remember the shock when I first saw the Blasphemy Slate."

"So it turns out that the Beyonder pathways are paths of the divine. It really is true that the Blasphemy Slate is blaspheming the deities.

"Above every pathway's Sequence 1, there is still a Sequence 0! And there's a corresponding potion and ritual!

"Each pathway has a Sequence 0!

"And Sequence 0 is the Sequence of a True God!

"For example, Sequence 0, Sun!"

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CHAPTER 266
THE WORLD'S COMMISSION

Sequence 0?

There's still a Sequence 0 above Sequence 1?

Sequence 0 is equivalent to a True God?

There can only be one Sequence 0 per pathway? Is this the true meaning of the paths of the divine?

As long as one consumes the corresponding potion, does a ritual, and grasps the acting method to digest the Beyonder characteristic, an ordinary person can become a god one step at a time?

This is truly blasphemous…

Could the main ingredients of the final potion be the godhood, divine blood, and body of the Eternal Blazing Sun?

…

The information on the diary's last page was filled with so much information that Klein almost couldn't think. He almost made additional body movements.

The twenty-two paths of the divine correspond to the twenty-two Sequence 0s… Sequence 0, Sun does sound very powerful… Perhaps, there's a Sequence 0, Death? I wonder what the names corresponding to the Goddess and the Lord of the Storms are… According to Emperor Roselle's

description, some of these cards are identical to the Major Arcana tarot cards, but some of them are different. The Cards of Blasphemy he created were standardized with the names of the potions… These can no longer be called potions…

Could the reason that the Emperor regretted not choosing the Seer, Apprentice, Marauder pathways be because their corresponding Sequence 0s have yet to appear?

Then what was the reason for the sudden personification of the Hidden Sage who was symbolically a deity?

What was Roselle plotting in the end? It feels like he became the enemy of everyone in the world, and that only seems possible if it was set into motion by that mysterious and ancient organization…

The Primordial Demoness is the name of Sequence 0 for the Demoness pathway?

Klein gradually found his train of thought, and he restrained the turmoil that was going through his mind.

He knew that he couldn't lose himself in this matter. He had to recover as quickly as possible; otherwise, Justice and The Hanged Man would discover something amiss and find it odd.

Mr. Fool has been reading that page too long!

I really want to obtain one of the Cards of Blasphemy that Emperor Roselle created. I want to know what else there is—other than the godhood-providing potion formulas and the corresponding rituals… Klein suppressed his shock and puzzlement and made Roselle's diary disappear from his hands.

He rapped the corner of the bronze table and looked to the side.

"Miss Justice, well done. You finished Bakerland in less than a week.

"According to the agreement, what kind of payment do you want?"

Bakerland is dead? That fast? Alger had left the islands in the past few days and hadn't received the appropriate information. He was astonished for a moment which made Audrey, who was secretly observing him, feel delighted.

Even if Alger was in the in the capital of the Rorsted Archipelago, the City of Generosity, Bayam, he might not have been informed in a timely fashion. After all, cable telegraph could only transmit limited information. Unless it was particularly urgent or important, there was always a delay of a few days. Sometimes, it would even take the colonists of the Rorsted Archipelago a month or two to get an update on the "latest" situation in the Northern Continent.

Restraining his thoughts, The Hanged Man looked at Mr. Fool in the thick fog and respectfully said with a hint of humility, "I'm very sorry. I just managed to contact someone and couldn't help."

"This is a commission, not a help request. Don't worry about it." Klein chuckled. He turned his gaze back to Miss Justice, waiting for her to say what she wanted in return.

May the Goddess bless me. Please don't let Miss Justice's request be too difficult. It's best if I can repay her with knowledge… I've learned quite a lot of amazing things from Roselle's diary… Klein silently prayed to the Goddess.

Of course, he was very clear that with the gray fog separating them, the Evernight Goddess definitely wouldn't be able to hear his prayers.

Audrey's eyes darted around as she thought for a few seconds.

Be honest and not greedy, Audrey, and stick to your principles! She gave a faint smile and said, "No, I'm actually the one still owing you. No—I owe your adorer the bounty.

"Rear Admiral Qilangos's bounty was worth a total of 30,000 pounds. I should give your adorer 15,000 pounds. Killing Bakerland cost 10,000 pounds, so I still need to pay an additional 5000 pounds. However, due to the matter with Bakerland, my finances are recently quite tight. I can only pay this bounty in a few months. Mr. Fool, is that alright?"

After she finished speaking, Audrey quietly exhaled. She felt that the little stone pressing against her heart was finally gone.

Although discussing money and calculating the payment in front of Mr. Fool feels somewhat inappropriate, I can't hide the rewards I received from his adorer… Audrey sighed silently.

As for the huge plantation worth more than eight thousand pounds, it was a private form of gratitude from Duke Negan and not a bounty.

5000 pounds? I can get another 5000 pounds? Qilangos's total bounty actually reached 30,000 pounds! Klein was startled.

Immediately, he fell into an intense mental struggle.

I'm supposed to pay this bounty to Mr. Azik, but I won't be able to get in touch with him for a long time… Putting the money aside would be a waste… I might as well use this money to enhance myself. When the time comes, I'll repay him by providing help… Klein made up his mind three seconds later as he lightly nodded at Miss Justice.

"Sure."

Upon hearing Mr. Fool's response, Audrey's graceful seating posture remained the same, but her heart was completely relaxed.

At that moment, Klein leaned back in his chair and fell silent. Then, he manipulated his smurf secretly from a commandeering position.

The World coughed and said, "Can I speak now?"

Audrey looked at Mr. Fool and seeing that he didn't say a thing, she nodded slightly and said, "Sure."

At the same time, she once again did a read on the new member, The World, and made a judgment.

When I mentioned that the assassination of Ambassador Bakerland was a result of my commissioning, he didn't show any shock or surprise. He either doesn't know the importance of the matter, not understanding the importance of an ambassador, or he's someone who can keep his calm and is good at hiding his emotions and bodily movements… The way he mouths his words doesn't match what he says. It should've been translated by Mr. Fool as well, which makes it impossible for me to get his original vocal tics, or know what language he usually uses… Thoughts flashed through Audrey's mind before Mr. World's hoarse voice sounded.

"I wish to obtain the true root of a Mist Treant, at least 60 milliliters of its juice, as well as the Spring of the Elves marrow crystals and the complete spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther.

"Which one of you can provide it, or provide any relevant clues?

"What do you wish to exchange them for?"

Klein added the Beyonder ingredient needed by the Apothecary to his commission so that the Tarot Club members wouldn't be able to guess the main ingredients of the formula he wanted.

Before Justice and The Hanged Man could react, The Sun who had been silent the entire time finally opened his mouth and said, "I know where Mist Treants are and I can help you obtain the materials. However, I must wait

until I finish my advancement and have sufficient strength to join the corresponding patrol team."

Recently, he had been accumulating merit points and rewards. He was working hard to obtain the main ingredients for the Light Suppliant through the City of Silver's officials and private markets. He was still lacking quite a bit.

As expected of the dangerous City of Silver with its numerous monsters… Klein silently commented in admiration, allowing The World to ask, "Then what do you wish to receive in exchange?"

Without hesitation, Derrick replied, "A weapon that suits me and can increase my combat strength."

The reason why he didn't mention the corresponding ingredients for Light Suppliant was because City of Silver had them all. They could be obtained through his own hard work.

Upon hearing this request, Klein immediately thought of the inscribed steel sword that had appeared at the Beyonder gathering organized by the elderly gentleman, Eye of Wisdom.

It was sharp enough, had the effect of exorcism and purification, and could be used for three years. It was valued at 500 pounds, perfectly matching The Sun's described requirements.

Why didn't you say so earlier… It has already been bought by someone else… Klein silently stared at the members, while The World nodded and said, "I will find a weapon that meets your requirements as soon as possible. Is this transaction to be witnessed by Mr. Fool?"

Klein nodded slightly to express his agreement.

At that moment, Audrey shot a glance at The Sun and warned him.

"Apart from the Mist Treant's juice, Mr. World's requested ingredients correspond to a Sequence 7. The rough price is about 500-700 pounds."

She felt that The Sun was too naive and was worried that he would be cheated by the unreadable Mr. World with cheap weapons.

Although Mr. Fool is impartial and advocates fair equal exchange, it's not his place to stop it if both sides agree. After all, some items are of low value but there are people who are in urgent need, so adding a premium to the price is very normal… Audrey thought to herself.

"A Sequence 7 formula is about 800 pounds," Alger added.

He had an instinctive aversion towards new members.

Klein translated with great difficulty, for he didn't know what the currency unit of the pound corresponded to in the City of Silver, and could only use a Series 9 potion formula as a unit.

"I understand." Derrick slightly nodded, and then quietly added, "…Thank you."

The World maintained his silent and staid temperament and didn't comment on what had just happened. He turned to Justice and The Hanged Man, waiting for their response.

Audrey thought for a few seconds and said, "Potion formula for Psychiatrist and their corresponding Beyonder ingredients. Uh… That's Sequence 7 of the Spectator pathway.

"You can gather the information first, and there's no rush to purchase them. Once I have clues regarding the Dark Patterned Black Panther and Spring of the Elves marrow crystals, we can proceed. Uh… if you are willing to exchange it for gold pounds, you can buy it at any time."

Although I'm out of money recently, I can still raise quite a bit if it's urgent… Audrey comforted herself.

Alger said in a deep voice, "Potion formula of the Sailor pathway's Sequence 6 Wind-blessed. This will be more expensive than the Beyonder ingredients that you want—combined.

"If you find it, you can think of the additional payment needed to make up for the difference.

"I can't guarantee that I'll be able to help you gather those ingredients. Even if it's just one of them, you don't need to expend any resources ahead of time."

Eh, Mr. Hanged Man should have a close relationship with the Church of the Lord of Storms… He should be able to get the Wind-blessed formula normally, right? Is he trying to hide the fact that he's digesting the Seafarer potion quickly? Klein was startled.

"Alright," The World answered in a low voice and then said, "I have another request."

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CHAPTER 267
SINGING TO THE SAME TUNE

The World looked around and said, "I want to get information about all the abject nobles in the Loen Kingdom, including their current addresses. The more details, the better."

He didn't directly mention Baronet Pound since Detective Sherlock Moriarty was currently handling an investigation regarding an underground structure that involved the Pound family.

Klein didn't want Justice to "figure out" The World's identity through this connection.

I can't ignore any details! He emphasized to himself.

Audrey stared blankly upon hearing that. She once again examined the member at the end of the long bronze table and probed, "What do you want to do?"

The World laughed with a hoarse voice. "That's not something you need to worry about. I'm only searching for some things. I won't do them any harm. I can swear on this point and allow Mr. Fool to bear witness."

Mr. World is really good at controlling his body language… Is his Sequence the nemesis of a Spectator or Telepathist? Audrey thoughtfully nodded and said, "I know some information about abject aristocrats, but it's not sufficiently detailed, concrete, or comprehensive. I need some time to gather all of it. It'll take three or four days, is that okay?"

As a noble, it was compulsory to have some knowledge about people in the same class. Audrey would always hear interesting stories when she attended various balls, banquets, and saloons, but they would all be fragmented and could hardly be considered a comprehensive body of knowledge. After all, she wasn't an expert in this field, and she still needed to fill in the details by flipping through books, asking around, and checking references to not miss any abject nobles.

"No problem." The World laughed deeply. "Then, what payment would you like in return? The things I can pay you with right now are some secret history from the Fourth Epoch, knowledge of some Beyonder pathways, and a few formulas. But frankly, I don't think that information concerning abject nobles is worth Sequence 7 or 8 potions. Heh, if you have any other requests, I can attempt to complete them."

It's not of equal value to Sequence 8 or 7 potion formulas, which means I'm unable to make a corresponding request for the Psychiatrist formula… Audrey began to ponder seriously.

During this process, she sneaked a glance at Mr. Fool, hoping for a hint, only to discover that Mr. Fool was shrouded in the gray fog and had no reaction whatsoever. He was like a god staring at the land beneath him.

Alright… Audrey finally made a decision and smiled.

"I want to hear about knowledge regarding other Beyonder pathways, but this is on the premise that I'm not aware of them."

"Dear Mr. Fool, can you be the judge for this?"

"Yes," Klein answered calmly.

"Then, let's have a private conversation." Audrey looked at The World.

At that moment, Klein rapped the table, isolating The Sun and The Hanged Man from hearing or seeing the exchange.

He deliberately nodded to his smurf, indicating that they could begin their private conversation.

The World looked at Miss Justice and spoke with his usual hoarse voice, "Do you know anything about the Demoness Sect?"

Audrey recalled the information she paid The Hanged Man Alger 1000 pounds for and answered briefly with caution, "I know what they believe in and what era they began from, as well as the Beyonder pathways they control and the inclination of their upper echelons."

The World laughed hoarsely and said, "I understand. You don't know much.

"The Demoness Sect controls the Assassin pathway. The Sequence 8 is Instigator."

"That's what I know," Audrey said, partially to inform The World, and partially to show her anticipation.

The World raised his hand and stroked his chin before saying, "Then, do you know the corresponding Sequence 7?"

Audrey shook her head slightly. "I'll be very happy to hear it from you."

"The Assassin pathway's Sequence 7 is called Witch," The World said simply.

"Witch?" Audrey jumped in fright at this word. She naturally made the corresponding connections in her mind. "Then, i-if a man consumes this potion, how is he supposed to act?"

Wearing beautiful dresses and putting on exquisite makeup, imitating a lady's every move? She was a little disgusted, yet strangely amused as the thought came to her.

"No, Miss Justice. When a man consumes this potion, he will no longer be considered a male. He will become a true lady." Klein resisted the urge to chortle as he controlled The World's response.

"Goddess, the Witch potion can change a person's sex?" Audrey blurted out.

This… this is really unbelievable! Mr. Fool didn't deny it, which means it's true! This is simply a miracle! This is the mysterious Beyonder world. This is a world filled with all sorts of inexplicable things! This is the world I long for! W-why am I feeling a little excited… After calming down a little, Audrey quickly and guiltily glanced at Mr. Fool and made a tiny confession that she had actually chanted the name of the Evernight Goddess in front of Him.

The World said in a low, hoarse voice, "Yes, but it can only make men become women. Women will accordingly have their charms enhanced. Whether it's their appearance or skin condition, they will become significantly improved, on the basis of their original looks. This is the reason why the upper echelons of the Demoness Sect are all women."

"Then, what flaws does it have?" Audrey suddenly felt her interest was aroused.

The World answered in an unhurried manner, "The requirement for their 'acting' is to become evil doers who bring about calamity, disease, and pain."

Audrey exhaled slightly and felt a little disappointed.

Her mind whirled quickly, and she immediately had a new question.

"If, and I'm saying if—an animal consumes the Witch formula without dying or losing control, would the enhancement of its charms be more suited to human tastes, or focused on charms for its own species? For example, a female cat which makes all male cats become fanatical towards it?"

The World was momentarily unsure how to respond. After a few seconds, he said, "I've never studied such matters."

Before Audrey could ask further, he added, "The corresponding Sequence 6 for the Witch pathway is Pleasure, or the Demoness of Pleasure. The requirement for 'acting' is to bring pleasure to both men and women, mainly in that aspect, as well as controlling or influencing them. The demonesses of this Sequence are very good at using special spider silk."

Audrey gaped her beautiful mouth, then she silently closed it again, deeply regretting her pinings from before.

"By knowing such information, it will allow you to effectively identify Demonesses. Heh heh, are you pleased with this payment?" The World asked.

Audrey nodded gently and said, "It helps me a lot. Um… the deal is completed. I will help you gather information on the abject nobles as soon as possible. Shall I give it to you the next time we meet?"

The World thought for a moment and asked, "Can it be faster?"

"Then, I'll offer the information I gathered to Mr. Fool and request that 'He' bestow them to you. Mr. Fool, is that okay?" Audrey turned her head and asked.

In the thick gray fog, Klein nodded his head in agreement.

At the same time, he busily controlled The World to whisper, "'He?'"

He detected the different way she said the word.

Noticing The World's astonishment, the corners of Audrey' s mouth curled up slightly, her eyes rolling upwards as she intentionally didn't make any explanation.

Klein rapped the long bronze table, indicating the end of the private exchange.

Then, he once again manipulated The World to say, "I have one more problem."

This newcomer has indeed accumulated a lot of requests… Audrey looked over, unsurprised.

Alger and Derrick both indicated they were listening through their body language.

The World said hoarsely, "I want to know if there are any more High-Sequence Beyonders in the Sauron family in Intis."

While The World spoke, Klein looked at The Sun through the corners of his eye and saw that the youth didn't have any additional reaction.

From the looks of it, the City of Silver doesn't have records of the Sauron family… This family most likely made an uprising after the Cataclysm… Klein looked around thoughtfully and discovered Justice and The Hanged Man looking at each other, obviously unaware of the answer. The Sun was undoubtedly at a loss and silent.

Thus, he lightly tapped the table again and said, "Let me answer this question. What can you pay for it?"

Before he could finish his sentence, Klein hurriedly controlled The World to say, "A formula, a Sequence 7 formula."

"Okay. Deal." Klein created an environment for a private exchange as he silently stared at his smurf for a few seconds.

Audrey and Alger, who were blocked, once again felt how unfathomable Mr. Fool was. They were both curious about the answer, but they also felt

that it was of no use to them. It wasn't worth it to spend a Sequence 7 potion formula in exchange for that.

After the private exchange, Klein deliberately made The World bow and say in a hoarse voice, "Honorable Mr. Fool, thank you for your answer; it was very helpful to me."

"This is an equivalent exchange; there's no need to thank me." Klein endured the goosebumps that suddenly surfaced on his skin as he answered indifferently.

The open communication that followed lasted less than ten minutes. Then, he announced the end of Tarot gathering before severing the connections with the crimson stars.

After the figures of Justice, The Hanged Man, and The Sun dissipated into streams of light, Klein looked at The World and chuckled.

With a smurf, a lot of things are really much more convenient.

Unfortunately, the All-Black Eye cannot be used outside the gray fog. What a pity.

As he thought that, he controlled The World to stand up and bow, then he let it melt into the majestic palace.

As he had to divert some of his attention in order to control his smurf, Klein had expended a great deal of his spirituality. He didn't continue staying in that space, and after retrieving the All-Black Eye and placing it behind the bronze table, he immediately returned to the real world.

At that moment, there was a rare case of Backlund sunshine, seen in autumn or winter, behind the tightly shut curtains.

Klein didn't have the time to take in this view. He slept for half an hour to recover some of his energy.

After waking up, due to having gained Miss Justice's promise and the fact that it wasn't urgent, he had no plans on searching for information at the library, and instead, decided to head to one of the many cemetery sites on the outskirts of Backlund before nightfall.

Klein was going to test the influence of Azik's copper whistle to understand its scope and limitations!

Of course, the experiment would only be carried out after dark. The reason why he was heading out now was that it would be very strange and very eye-catching to hire a carriage to visit a cemetery in the evening.

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CHAPTER 268
THE CEMETERY AND THE HOSPITAL

When the steam metro arrived at the southern bank of the Tussock River, Klein rented a carriage and headed to the Aston Cemetery on the outskirts of the South Borough, which was managed by the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery.

Under the darkness of dusk, the trees around the cemetery seemed to bare their fangs and brandish their claws, blocking out the light like monsters lurking in the darkness.

After the carriage driver took the 4 soli Klein paid, he looked at the cemetery and muttered, "Do you need me to wait here for you?"

"No, there's no need. I'm here to visit a friend." Klein came up with an excuse, and he immediately noticed the change in the driver's face.

This is a cemetery… to visit a friend with the sky already dark… The driver could hear his own heart thumping.

Klein jolted to his senses, smiled, and added, "He's the tomb keeper here."

The carriage driver was immediately relieved, but he didn't dare stay. He quickly drove the horses and left.

Klein circled the graveyard until the night truly set in.

After dark, the smoke and dust emissions decreased by a lot. In addition to the biting cold wind, the fog in the air thinned a lot. Although few stars could be seen, the crimson moon made a furtive appearance, covering the ground with a veil-like glow.

Klein tapped his chest four times clockwise, drawing out the crimson moon. Then, he put on his gloves, pushed himself over the iron fence, and entered the cemetery.

He looked around with a high degree of caution, randomly found a secluded corner, took out Azik's copper whistle, and held it in his hand.

Not far in front of him was a tombstone. The photograph on it was dirty, and the epitaph appeared extremely blurry in the moonlight. Klein carefully read it for a few seconds before figuring out what they were.

"Friend, if you are passing by, help me up. Thanks!"

A very humorous gentleman… I choose you! Klein stopped, leaned back against the trees that sheltered the grave from the sun and rain, and waited patiently in the cold, chilly night.

He threw Azik's copper whistle up before catching it firmly, repeating it several times to pass the time until twenty minutes later.

No signs of the dead coming back to life… Klein clicked his pocket watch shut, surveyed his surroundings, and confirmed the results.

I'll come back here in two days to see if there are any additional changes. If there are none, it means that Mr. Azik's copper whistle won't be able to affect corpses that have been laid to rest through a priest's ritual. Klein silently muttered to himself, and he put the ancient and exquisite copper whistle back into his pocket.

There were three kinds of burials in the Loen Kingdom. The first type had coffins and corpses, suitable for the middle and upper classes living in

abundance. The second type was the ones without corpses, so a cremation was held. The remaining ashes were placed in urns. This was the choice of the lower middle class and technical workers who could pay for the cremation but found coffins to be too wasteful. But there were also times when religious and governmental factors had an impact, such as the believers of the Eternal Blazing Sun. The majority of them underwent cremation, and the poor people only needed to pay a small fee for the cremation due to the help they received from the government.

The third only belonged to the poor. They couldn't afford coffins, and they didn't wish for cremation, so they just wrapped the corpses up and buried them.

But Klein had already determined from the tombstones and tombs that the target of his experiment was the kind which involved a coffin and a corpse.

If Azik's copper whistle really can cause the dead to rise, even if the target had rotted into a pile of bones, there shouldn't be a complete lack of reaction. Even if the lid of the coffin cannot be opened, it should've at least created a dull thud.

As he walked towards the fence, Klein suddenly thought of a non-rigorous part of the experiment.

Yes, I need to categorize them. The corpses here have been buried for quite a while. I should find a target that was recently buried.

Only by doing so will I be able to arrive at the most accurate conclusion.

After that, Klein basically played a game of cat-and-mouse with the cemetery guardians before finding a grave that had completed a burial ceremony during the day.

This time, he waited for half an hour, but he still didn't find anything abnormal.

Phew, I can basically determine that Mr. Azik's copper whistle can't affect a corpse that has undergone a ritual that puts the soul to rest. That's quite weak, no—that's not right. This copper whistle isn't meant to cause the dead to come alive. It's used to summon messengers, so affecting a corpse is a negative effect! Klein tightened his double-breasted coat and walked toward the iron fence.

He planned on heading home to have a change of clothes before trying out his second experiment.

The target of the second experiment group were the recently deceased corpses that haven't been laid to rest via a ritual.

Such targets often existed in a hospital's morgue!

Climbing over the fence, Klein made his way back to the South Borough on foot in the dreary, dark night. The surroundings were deathly still and quiet. Only the evergreen, dust covered trees lightly swayed.

It reminded him of the night he had been resurrected from the dead. Back then, he too had to walk from the cemetery to the city.

Sigh… Klein sighed and suddenly began to run, as if trying to get rid of the melancholy that filled him.

More than half an hour later, he rented a carriage in South Borough and headed for the nearest steam metro station.

There was still about an hour before the metro stopped running, and this could save him quite a bit of money.

…

In the wee hours of the morning, Klein changed into a grayish-blue worker's uniform and wore a cap as he made his way to St. Estin's Hospital in the Backlund Bridge area.

This was a charity hospital belonging to the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery.

Many of the poor died here due to illness, and since there was nowhere for them to place their bodies, they had to be kept in the hospital morgue. There, the corpses awaited cremation from the government or be donated to the medical schools. This phenomenon was very common in summer, but there weren't many in the autumn or winter after it cooled down.

However, in an era without air-conditioning or equipment to keep the temperature cool, the hospital's morgue couldn't keep the corpses for too long. Donated bodies would be quickly embalmed and bodies to be buried the next day would be cleaned up. Of course, these were the rules enforced in summer. In autumn and winter, the rules were relatively relaxed; therefore, there were still many corpses left overnight in the morgue during this period.

The morgue at St. Estin was underground. It was relatively cool, even during the summer, and was biting cold during autumn and winter.

Based on what he had learned as a Nighthawk, Klein relied on a Clown's agility and balance to sneak into the basement while avoiding the doctors and nurses that were on duty.

Before he even got close to the morgue, he felt a chill down his spine.

After quickly moving past the janitor's room, Klein took out a piece of wire and lightly unlocked the door to the morgue.

This was one of the methods of infiltration and tracking!

He slowly and silently pushed open the door to the morgue with his black-gloved right hand. At the same time, he cloaked Azik's copper whistle in his spirituality to determine if such a method could eliminate the negative effects.

The temperature in the morgue seemed to be lower than the corridor. Most of the corpses were bagged up and placed in different iron cabinets. Only a few were placed on the long table in the central open space, as if they were awaiting examination.

As a Sequence 8 Clown, Klein was no longer afraid of such scenes. He just instinctively felt uncomfortable.

Carefully, he closed the door and walked around the long tables.

After about ten minutes, Klein let out a breath of cold air and confirmed that none of the corpses had come to life.

It's about time… He took out his gold pocket watch and opened it.

When he was ready, Klein withdrew his spirituality and stopped enveloping Azik's copper whistle.

He wasn't sure if it was a psychological effect, but he had a baffling feeling that the surroundings had become even more silent.

As a Seer, he fully believed in his instincts. He stopped pacing back and forth and retreated towards the door.

Time ticked by, and Klein determined that it took about two minutes.

At that moment, a corpse on a long table suddenly sat up!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The surrounding iron cabinets emitted a series of banging noises, as though all hell was about to break loose!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Upon hearing such a commotion and seeing the corpses sit up, Klein suddenly said in a low voice, "Crimson!"

Immediately following that, he injected his spirituality into a Requiem Charm and threw it out.

Icy-blue flames burned quietly, and serene and gentle blackness spread out. The corpses lay down once again, and the banging sounds coming from the cabinets came to an abrupt halt.

Klein, who had experienced a similar situation, didn't relax and used another Requiem Charm.

As there were many corpses around him, he used a third charm to be safe, using up everything that he had.

Not bad… Indeed, it only affects corpses that haven't been put to rest via a ritual. This includes corpses that haven't been dead for too long and zombies. Using my spirituality to shield the whistle can prevent such effects. Klein thought with a smile.

Seeing that none of the corpses were making any abnormal reactions, he prepared to open the door and leave.

At that moment, he suddenly heard footsteps coming from the outside and saw a faint light seeping in.

The elderly janitor had been attracted by the banging sound in the morgue. He was approaching with a lantern in hand!

Klein looked around, placing his hand on the door, he nimbly jumped up, stopping at the spot between the door and the ceiling.

His fingers dug into the bumps and cracks as he maintained perfect balance.

Creak!

The elderly janitor opened the door with his key and entered the morgue.

He took a few steps forward, held up his lantern, and examined the iron cabinets and long tables, as well as the corpses.

Behind him, Klein nimbly jumped down and landed silently.

Seizing the opportunity, Klein quickly escaped from the morgue. He used the janitor's room to hide for a few seconds before carefully returning to the upper floor.

After the elderly janitor surveyed the surroundings and didn't find anything out of the ordinary, he mumbled a sentence, in fear of the corpses, and quickly left. He locked the door and didn't stay any longer.

Returning to the guardroom, he wrapped a thin blanket around himself and took several minutes to calm his racing heart before mumbling to himself in a low voice, "Those old guys always tell me about the weird things that happen in the morgue, hoping to scare me. Those weird sounds just now should count as well. It doesn't matter. Those corpses didn't come back to life either!

"Pui, there are no such things as zombies and wraiths!"

At the same time, Klein was walking comfortably along the quiet, dark streets, happy to be free of a latent threat.

He looked at the elegant gas lamps that lined the sides of the street and looked forward to the future Beyonder gatherings.

As long as he obtained a weapon with a special effect, he would be able to obtain one of the main ingredients of a Magician!

Hmm… Although I don't have much money right now, I still have a lot of assets that I can use to exchange. For example, the Telepathist potion formula, or the formulas for Bard and Light Suppliant. Furthermore, my Clown potion is digesting at a faster rate than I expected due to series of events and my discovery of the essence needed for "acting." It's close to

being completely digested… Along the streets of Backlund at night, Klein left his mind wandering.

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CHAPTER 269
CLUES TO THE PSYCHOLOGY ALCHEMISTS

On the outskirts of Empress Borough, in a wide, empty horse track.

Audrey Hall deliberately led a chestnut mare to a corner and pretended to discuss something with Viscount Glaint.

She was wearing white pants and knee-high black boots, adorned with a simple blouse and a black jacket that reached her waist. In addition, she donned a helmet of the same color. She looked especially valiant and beautiful, and Susie, her golden retriever, was obediently sitting by her feet. What seemed like a tiny leather satchel hung from her back.

Disguised as Viscount Glaint, Xio glanced enviously at Audrey's long, straight legs, and unconsciously tiptoed.

"Just horse-riding is so blasé. Only when it is combined with hunting does it become imbued with life. Of course, I mean the equestrian skills for men. No matter what a beautiful lady does, it would still be a sight to behold," Glaint sized up Audrey and said half-jokingly.

Audrey replied with a slight smile, "The next hunt is still months away."

Every year, from June to the New Year, the aristocrats of the Loen Kingdom would come to Backlund to attend various banquets, dances, and salons, as per tradition. This was a very important event for them, and many things would be decided within a few months.

After the new year, the nobles would return to their fiefdom—their castles, country estates, and large plantations—and spend their leisure time there. In such times, the most popular sport was hunting.

The nobles would invite guests of similar status to enjoy the pleasure of horse-riding and chasing prey. As long as their financial situation allowed it, they weren't stingy with buying hounds.

The most famous of the hounds was the foxhound.

"I already miss that life. Backlund is a place where people feel constrained, and its air is indescribably terrible. Of course, I still enjoy its extravagance." Viscount Glaint wore his gloves and stepped back to make it easier for Audrey to talk to Xio and Fors.

"Honorable Miss Audrey, why have you called us here this time?" Xio initiated the question as she retracted her gaze.

Audrey took a large portion of most of her recent income. She was honest and generous, a rarely encountered good employer.

I seem to smell the ink of money again… Hopefully, the mission wouldn't be too difficult… Miss Audrey is perfect in every way, except for one thing. Every mission is unexpected and very dangerous… Xio thought, feeling both anticipation and apprehension. She couldn't help but glance sideways at Fors. She noticed that her companion, disguised as a maid, was looking right at her.

The expressions reflected in their eyes looked very similar.

Audrey held her gloves, smiled reservedly and elegantly before saying, "It's a simple request this time."

As she spoke, she motioned with her eyes for Xio and Fors to open the leather satchel on Susie.

Xio, who had always been known for her proactiveness, immediately took two steps forward and bent down to reach out with her hand.

During this short period of time, she had originally wanted to pat Susie's head to show that she meant no harm. But just as she extended her right palm, Susie had already turned her head, turning her body half around, placing the small leather satchel in front of her.

I'm usually popular with animals… For example, mosquitoes… Xio kept her expression unchanged as she unzipped the satchel and took out a stack of papers from Susie's leather pouch.

She stood up and took a look at the stack of papers. She saw that it depicted a young man with ordinary looks, but his neatly combed hair, round glasses, and mocking brown eyes all looked very familiar to her.

I must've seen him somewhere! Xio looked down and saw the corresponding description.

"Formerly used name: Lanevus, wanted swindler."

I know where I've seen him before! Xio was suddenly enlightened and almost made an inelegant gesture of slapping her forehead.

Before she met Audrey, one of the main sources of her income was flipping through newspapers, researching wanted posters, and using her connections in many gangs in East Borough to seek out criminals who were worth fat bounties.

I had thought of finding this Lanevus, who has a bounty of 100 pounds. Besides, he swept away more than 10,000 pounds in cash! However, I've recently been too busy with Miss Audrey's requests and had forgotten about this matter… Xio and Fors looked at each other and then asked frankly, "How much is this request worth?"

How much is the request worth? Audrey was startled for a moment.

She had completely forgotten the matter of payment, as from her point of view, it was a test from Mr. Fool.

When were examinees ever given money?

"Uh… 100 pounds?" Audrey deliberated and gave a number.

"Deal!" Xio and Fors answered in unison.

If we can catch him, not only would we receive a hundred pounds from Miss Audrey, but we can also obtain an equal amount from the bounty… What a great mission! Xio asked casually, her eyes shining,

"Why are you looking for this swindler? Did he swindle you of your money?"

I don't even know who he is… It's really a simple request. A hundred pounds was enough to complete the deal… There's no need to tell Mr. Fool about this. It's only a hundred pounds… Audrey, with a polite smile, ignored Xio's question and instead mentioned, "I received word that he's in Backlund.

"Ah yes, there are a dozen or so portraits here, different portraits. I took into account that Lanevus must have disguised himself, so I'm giving you pictures of him without glasses, with a beard, with a change of hairstyle. Uh… pictures based on conjectures."

I'm also very good at drawing and painting! Audrey tilted her chin.

Xio immediately forgot her previous question and said in pleasant surprise, "This is really good news!"

She felt as though she could already see the bounty of two hundred pounds beckoning at her.

The mysterious person she had met at Mr. A's gathering had yet to establish contact with her. Therefore, all she could do was continue with her business

of earning money.

Audrey nodded indiscernibly. She muttered, "Do you have any leads on the matter regarding the Psychology Alchemists?"

Fors adjusted her long curly hair, looked at Viscount Glaint who was listening to the side, and said, "I recently joined a new Beyonder gathering. Rumor has it that the Spectator and Telepathist potion formulas have previously appeared there. I'm suspecting that one of the members from the gathering is from the Psychology Alchemists.

"I'll apply to bring you with me the next gathering."

"Alright." Audrey deliberately didn't hide her joy.

She had read their true state of mind from the colors, body language, and the subtle expressions of Xio and Fors, to judge their enthusiasm for the mission. They didn't lie regarding the Psychology Alchemists either.

Viscount Glaint mumbled, "Audrey's matters seems to be on the brink of success. Where's my formula, Audrey?"

"There are really no clues as of yet. The Apothecary pathway is mostly in the south, where the Feynapotter Kingdom is." Fors gestured with deep regret.

"Alright, I'm still young. I'm only in my early twenties. I still have time to wait," Glaint replied in a humorous tone.

"Alright, thank you for your help. See you again next time." Audrey bowed gracefully, wore her gloves, and mounted her horse as she rode down the track.

Susie happily followed, as if she had found new entertainment.

…

As he spent the night "experimenting," it was already 9:34 of a Tuesday morning by the time Klein woke up.

Biting into a piece of bread slathered with butter, he wore his coat and hat, hurried out the door, and wrote on the message book hanging by the doorbell's pull rope:

"Owner is out and will be back after five in the afternoon."

Actually, he didn't have much to do. It was purely to guard against a sudden visit from Millet Carter.

If the other party found out that the detective he hired for a full fifty pounds wasn't out and about, searching for information or organizing people to confirm the layout of the structure, and was instead at home leisurely drinking tea and reading novels, he would surely revoke the commission and not pay the last forty pounds!

I really have nothing to do but wait for Miss Justice's information… Klein stood at the end of the street and looked at the haze in the sky, while helplessly muttering to himself.

He had already decided last night where he would spend the day.

In the morning, I'll practice shooting at the Quelaag Club, read the newspapers, enjoy a free lunch, take a nap in the afternoon, exercise through playing sports like squash. Once the Bravehearts Bar opens, I'll take a carriage there and see if I can learn about more Beyonder gatherings from Kaspars.

Klein had no intention of looking for Maric. Although he was certain that he had more than one circle of Beyonders, he was afraid that Miss Bodyguard would also belong to those circles.

It wouldn't be convenient for him to sell potion formulas, as it would arouse a high degree of suspicion.

Since the True Creator has given you the ability to divine and a strong body, would he still grant you potion formulas that you do not need? It's impossible just thinking about it! Klein filled in the details with his imagination as he boarded the public carriage that headed for Hillston Borough.

Half an hour later, he entered the Quelaag Club and saw an acquaintance.

It was Talim Dumont, the equestrian teacher who had recommended him to the club. He was Mary Gale's friend.

Dressed in a black tweed overcoat, the brown-haired Talim walked over. He sized up Klein and said with an odd smile, "Good morning. Mary and Doragu are getting a divorce."

Are you suspecting the reason why I joined the club? Relying on the Clown's ability, Klein easily made a surprised expression.

"Really? That is really surprising!"

Talim gave him a deeply suspicious look and suddenly laughed.

"I have a friend who's been troubled about something recently. I want to know how good your marksmanship and fighting skills are."

A commission? He only asked about my marksmanship and fighting skills, not reasoning. This is a request involving violence… Klein smiled and said, "I was planning on heading to the shooting range. You can take a look, but fighting requires an opponent to be able to see my standard."

"I've learned how to fight before," Talim eagerly replied.

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CHAPTER 270
REPORTER

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Holding onto a revolver that he rented from the Quelaag Club with one hand, Klein pulled the trigger repeatedly, hitting the bullseye accurately, with the worst shot hitting the 8 ring.

By feeding his practice with live bullets, along with the superhuman control that he had after becoming a Clown, his marksmanship was considered rather excellent.

If I continue practicing for a few months, I could even be considered a sharpshooter… Klein unloaded the revolver in satisfaction and cleared the empty shells. They fell to the ground noisily as he looked at Talim Dumont with a smile.

"Are you satisfied?"

"Very good." The equestrian teacher, Talim, had already taken off his black tweed overcoat and light gray sweater and adopted a boxing stance. "Come on, let me see the standard of your fighting skills. I can tell you frankly that I've received training as a trainee knight since I was young, and I've never let it go to waste."

As a Beyonder, if I can't even beat an ordinary man who has only received training, then I might as well die! Klein cursed silently. Without taking off his double-breasted coat, he set down his revolver. Klein took two side steps and gestured to Talim that he could begin.

He originally wanted to wriggle his finger to add to the atmosphere, but when he thought of the other party's strength, he couldn't be bothered to waste his time.

Talim appeared to be a little excited as he began bounce-stepping a little. He suddenly pressed forward and threw out a punch to the right.

Klein blocked and grabbed with his left hand, bent low and twisted his waist before reaching out his right palm, and did a smooth backflip.

Thud. Talim flew out, landing on his back. Klein didn't exert any strength towards the end, only throwing him off his feet through the use of inertia.

"Impressive!" Talim quickly stood up and gave a thumbs up. "As expected of a famous detective. Your marksmanship and fighting skills are excellent."

I only beat a weak chicken like you, so how can you tell that my fighting skills are very high? Klein secretly lampooned and asked with a smile, "Now that you have a better picture, can you tell me what kind of request your friend has?"

"Heh heh, he will come to the club later. You can talk amongst yourselves." Talim massaged his back as he said, "As for what the request exactly entails, I'm not sure either. Oh right, he's a reporter at the Daily Observer, Mike Joseph. He's probably hoping for some short-term protection."

"Alright." Klein didn't ask any more questions. He continued practicing his shooting, but he didn't limit himself to a revolver. He also practiced with a hunting rifle, a single-shot rifle, and a repeating rifle. He hoped that if he encountered any problems in the future, he would be able to use any of the firearms around him.

Shortly before twelve, noon, he returned to the first floor, went into the buffet cafeteria, and got a serving of roast chicken and a piece of pan-fried steak, as well as the club's limited supply of cream cheese lobster

After placing his meal down, Klein got some Feynapotter seafood rice, fruit salad, oyster broth, and marquis black tea.

Facing this sumptuous lunch, he couldn't help but swallow a mouthful of saliva as he praised the Goddess in his heart.

If this was eaten outside, it would probably cost 3 soli… Klein switched between using silver knives, forks, and spoons as he ate in contentment.

When he was almost done with the food on the table, Talim Dumont led a man, in a heavy overcoat and a half top hat, over.

"Detective Moriarty, this is the friend I was talking about, Mike Joseph. Mike, this is the famous detective, Mr. Sherlock Moriarty," Talim smiled and introduced them.

"Nice to meet you." Mike took off his hat and bowed.

He looked to be in his late twenties, with rather sparse eyebrows and rough skin. His pores were unusually prominent.

However, his facial features weren't bad. His blue eyes were especially charming. The two thin lines from the meager mustache gave him a somewhat mature charm.

Klein couldn't help but stroke the stubble that had become thicker around his lips. He got up and invited the other party to sit down, then he smiled and said, "Today's cream cheese lobster is pretty good. You can give it a try."

"Alright." Mike Joseph didn't refuse. He took a plate, made a circle, and picked up a lot of food.

"He came in a hurry, so he hasn't had lunch yet," Talim smiled as he explained for his friend and placed a stack of newspapers on the table.

"I can tell." Klein set down his knife and fork, wiped his mouth with a napkin, and sipped his black tea leisurely.

He was very satisfied with the meal.

At that moment, Mike Joseph came back with two plates of food. He took a few quick bites to fill his stomach before looking up at Klein.

"Detective Moriarty, have you heard about the recent serial murders?"

"The ones which had organs removed?" Klein's heart skipped a beat as he asked.

Talim nodded and said wistfully, "As expected, every detective is paying attention to this serial killer."

Mike pulled out one of the papers and pushed it to Klein. "This is the latest story."

Klein took it and discovered that it was the Daily Observer where Mike worked at. On the front page were the words:

"11! Another lady killed! Sivellaus Yard is helpless!"

The headquarters of the Backlund Police Department was located at Sivellaus Street at the edge of Empress Borough, so they were also known as Sivellaus Yard.

11? It's already the eleventh case? Klein resisted the urge to frown and continued reading. He found that it was indeed the same as the case he had previously encountered. The victim was a woman dressed in a gorgeous long skirt and had her intestines removed from her stomach.

This is clearly a case with signs of devil worship all over it. The Sivellaus Yard must've handed the case to the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind squads. They have people capable of divination,

mediumship, and all sorts of magical and effective Beyonder methods. How is it that the case hasn't been cracked. Why isn't the criminal arrested yet? Does the criminal have rich 'anti-investigation' powers and is able to destroy the souls of the deceased? Or could it be that the deceased soul, along with her innards, were extracted to fulfill the requirements of the devil-worship ritual? Yes, he's definitely capable of interfering with divination… Indeed, if the Devil pathway Beyonders lack such powers, how could they dare commit serial murders… Klein thought as he said to Mike Joseph, "You want to do a private investigation?

"I'm sorry, I can't take this case. Without the invitation of the police, I cannot take it. I have to maintain a good relationship with them."

The so-called good relationship is the kind where they invite me to the police station for coffee… Klein did some self-critical lampooning.

The real reason for his refusal was that it was easy to run into official Beyonders involved in the investigation of the serial killings, perhaps including the Backlund diocese's Nighthawks.

"No, not an investigation. No, the precise description is that it's not an investigation to seek the murderer. I just want to finish my report," Mike Joseph swallowed some shrimp and explained.

"Report?" Klein put down his white enamel cup, crossed his hands, and leisurely asked Mike Joseph.

Mike Joseph said, "If you buy the Daily Observer tomorrow or the day after, you'll see my in-depth coverage on the serial killings. The most important part is my reveal of what the victims have in common so as to alert people who fall into this group."

"Oh, what do they have in common?" Klein asked curiously.

Mike took a sip of his coffee and said, "Besides being a woman and wearing a colorful dress, there's one other important thing they have in

common. I did a thorough investigation of the victim's career and found an interesting tidbit.

"Some of them are maids, others textile workers, tailors, and even teachers. On the surface, there doesn't seem to be any overlap, but in reality, they've all been street girls."

"Street girl? A teacher?" Klein asked in surprise.

In the Loen Kingdom, teachers were part of the middle class and received at least two pounds a week. That was enough to make a woman lead quite a good life, so there was no need for her to be a street girl.

The corner of Mike's mouth twitched as he sighed and said, "Yes, in the past. They may have had very difficult times before they found a job that could support them.

"I've done a survey before. In Backlund, one in six women aged 15 to 55 is or has been a street girl. Heh, this is our country. Foreigners who come here are surprised that a very conservative country, a bustling metropolis, would actually be filled with street girls."

Th-this number is a little exaggerated… If it were true, it could only be said that reality can be more exaggerated than fiction… This damned world… Klein was speechless. After some thought, he said deliberately, "One question, how does the murderer know that the victim had been a street girl? They don't have labels on them, and even you needed a thorough investigation to discover this."

"As expected of a great detective, this might be the clue," Mike Joseph answered without feeling surprised.

No, if it was a Beyonder from the Devil path, then the standard he would choose from would be someone who appears to have sunken low but didn't actually degenerate completely. Furthermore, they should have a keen intuition towards degeneration, and they might be able to see the

corresponding "color" that runs deep. With the colorful dress as a trigger, the target will basically be locked onto… Klein answered himself and asked, "So, what else do you wish to investigate?"

Mike nodded and said, "From these 11 cases, ten of the ladies were once street girls, except one. She's still a prostitute at present. Yes, she's the youngest, sixteen-year-old Siber. This makes it very, very odd. I wish to visit Golden Rose, which is her, uh—the place where she works for further investigation. I want to see if I can discover anything.

"I'm worried that my questions will anger the people there, so I plan to ask you to protect me temporarily. You don't need to teach them a lesson, and you just need to protect me at the most critical juncture and allow my escape.

"If nothing happens, I'll pay you a pound, and if there's a fight, it'll be raised to five pounds. What do you think?"

Klein laughed and replied, "Let me wash my hands before replying you."

He bowed politely and sauntered over to the bathroom where he tossed a coin and obtained a positive answer.

1. This is the late-Victoria era, a statistic in London.

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CHAPTER 271
GOLDEN ROSE

19 Hope Street, Cherwood Borough.

This area was located close to the Tussock River which went through Backlund. Pedestrians could see the turbid but unusually wide water surface through the cracks and crevices in their houses.

The Daily Observer reporter, Mike Joseph, alighted the carriage and pointed at a three-story, grayish-blue building ahead of them. He said to Klein, who was standing next to him and wearing a black double-breasted suit and a half top hat and gold-rimmed glasses, "That's the Golden Rose, the best legal brothel in the area of the Backlund Bridge, as well as Cherwood Borough. It opens at three in the afternoon and stays open until two in the morning."

The best legal brothels in the Cherwood and Backlund Bridge regions? In other words, there are better ones in these two regions but they're illegal? Klein silently mused and shot a glance at the entrance which had an inlaid golden rose. It didn't hang any signboards.

"This doesn't count as a street girl, right?" he answered without thinking.

"Of course, it's of a higher grade." Mike personally led Klein to the front of the building and pushed the door open.

As soon as he entered, Klein caught a whiff of a mixed fragrance that was slightly pungent and heard a soothing yet suggestive melody.

Instinctively, he looked around and saw bouncers, in black coats and half top hats, standing on either side of the entrance and in every corner of the hall. As a legitimate business, they were obviously meant to deal with drunkards and boors.

The golden hall was surrounded by all sorts of sofas, chairs, and even a piano. In the center, there was a dancing area.

At that moment, there were many ladies sitting in different areas with their hair colored in gold, brown, pale yellow, or black. Some of them looked mature, some shy and young, some young and attractive, and others who were rather beautiful.

These ladies were either enjoying the melody, giggling whilst in conversations with each other, quietly reading newspapers and magazines, or dancing with the men.

It was only half past three in the afternoon, so there weren't many customers. At a glance, this place looked more like a proper ball than a brothel.

"If you come after eight in the evening, you'll see some interesting performances. Heh heh, if any of the ladies catch your eye, go over and invite them to dance and then ask them for their prices amidst the beautiful melody. If both sides can come to an agreement, you can head to the second or third floor and have a wonderful time in some room. Hehe, as long as you're willing to spend money, you can sleep here the entire night." Mike turned his head from left to right, suddenly losing his previous calm and gentlemanliness, appearing a little more frivolous.

He walked into the hall with a smile, and he approached a young girl who was at most fifteen or sixteen years old.

I-is he showing his true nature, or is this an conduct of a professional? Klein watched, a little flabbergasted as he subconsciously followed behind Mike Joseph.

"The victim, Siber, was only 16 years old. In theory, a girl of similar age is more likely to be a friend and would know more," At that moment, Mike lowered his voice and explained.

He then raised his thin eyebrows and asked in a normal voice, "Which lady caught your fancy?"

"I'm just your bodyguard," Klein responded with very normal logic.

Mike slightly nodded and suddenly laughed.

"I'm not used to being watched when I do that sort of thing."

"I'll be standing watch outside." Klein understood what Mike meant, and took a serious, professional stance.

Without another word, Mike walked up to the young girl, bent down, and extended his hand, inviting her to dance.

Being a prostitute at this age, Backlund sure is so bedazzling and dirty… Heh, to think that there would be a middle-aged gentleman of seemingly good bearing patronizing this place. Even the sides of his hair are white… Klein lowered his hands and stood very straight, watching Mike and the young girl engage in a slow dance.

After a few minutes, Mike walked back and said to Klein with slight annoyance, "It's too expensive."

As the two approached each other, he added in a low voice, "The girl knew Siber, but the owner, Ma'am. Lopez, forbids them from speaking with anyone else on this matter; otherwise, they would be severely punished. God, when the punishment was mentioned, the poor girl even shuddered instinctively. I can imagine how horrible it must be."

Helpless, Klein sighed in sympathy, and asked in a suppressed voice, "So, what are you planning to do?"

"I don't want to cause trouble for those girls again. I plan on going straight to Ma'am. Lopez." Mike patted Klein on the shoulder and said, "Protect me!"

Klein turned his body to the side and warned in a serious tone, "If we encounter a dangerous situation, you must listen to me.

"Do you understand? Listen to me!"

"Okay, okay." Mike raised his hands to his shoulders and nodded.

As he spoke, he walked towards a single sofa in the corner. There was a charming lady, with thick makeup, in a gorgeous dress seated there.

"If you don't want to give up after a dance and embarrass yourself in front of those girls, I suggest you talk to Ma'am. Lopez first and find out the prices of the different girls," Mike raised his voice.

The lady heard their conversation and looked over. She slowly got up and smiled.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen. I'm Lopez. Did any girl catch your fancy?"

"Yes." Mike suddenly sized her up and said with a chuckle, "I really admire you."

*I admire you too… You're acting like this is your home… *Klein's mouth twitched.

Lopez's expression froze for a second, then she gave a fake laugh and said, "Sorry, I'm not feeling well today. You should know that there are times every month where women feel quite under the weather."

Seeing that there was no way to get Lopez into a room for a conversation, Mike fell silent for a few seconds before suddenly turning serious.

"Ma'am. Lopez, I'm a reporter. I wish to understand more about Siber's matter. Here's my documentary proof."

Lopez's face darkened and she replied impatiently, "I've already told everything I know to the police. You should ask them!

"Siber was a vagrant orphan who was adopted by me. That night, she accepted an invitation from a guest to spend the night at his house, and she died on her way back in the morning.

"Alright, please leave! Or invite a lady to dance."

As she spoke, Lopez waved over two of her bouncers.

Klein stepped in to shield off Mike Joseph and escorted him back to the hall. Upon seeing this, the two bouncers didn't rashly chase him away.

After a few steps, Klein said in a low voice, "She's lying."

"Oh?" Mike turned his head in surprise.

"When she spoke, her eyes darted around. She didn't dare to look at you directly, but she was also secretly sizing you up, which means she was lying and watching your reaction. In addition, her stance was highly defensive, and she appeared very agitated." Klein gave his analysis.

Mike opened his mouth and exclaimed after a few seconds, "You really are a great detective. Only with your keen observation and outstanding deduction skills were you able to discover such useful details."

*That's only because I had my Spirit Vision on and could see that Lopez's emotional colors weren't right… I came up with the reasons after… *Klein smiled and said, "Thank you, it's time for us to go."

Mike Joseph looked back at Lopez and saw that she was walking towards the side door of the hall, as though she was going to her own lounge, and

that the side door was in a corner of the room. It was very quiet around there, and there were many areas in the hall that couldn't see what was going on inside. There were also two bouncers standing guard outside.

"Perhaps, we should follow Ma'am. Lopez and observe her reaction. Maybe the anxiety from just now will make her do something…" Mike suddenly turned his head to look at Klein. "Can you take care of those two bouncers quickly?"

"Sir, I'm only responsible for your protection, and that's against the law." Klein smiled in response.

"I'll pay you more! A total of five pounds based on the combat price from before! If there's another fight when we run, it would be 10 pounds! " Mike Joseph gritted his teeth.

"Deal!" Klein reached out and shook his hand.

Afterward, the two of them circled around to avoid the two bouncers from before and quietly approached the side door.

"Guests, please stop. Please leave this area." One of the bouncers stepped forward and stopped Klein and Mike Joseph.

"Sorry, we'll immediately…" Klein bowed politely and apologized.

At that moment, his right fist suddenly punched out, heavily striking at the bouncer's abdomen in front of him.

The bouncer instinctively clutched his stomach, his body bent over. As for Klein, who had now stood up, he raised his left hand and chopped the bouncer at the back of the head.

Pow!

The bouncer fell to the ground and fainted. His companion was clearly caught by surprise at this turn of events. He just stared blankly and failed to react in time.

Klein immediately slid over and covered the bouncer's mouth with his right hand and punched his abdomen with his left fist.

Bang!

The bouncer suddenly bent down and spat out his undigested food, and Klein promptly withdrew his right hand and chopped downward with his palm.

At the same time, his left hand supported his opponent, allowing the bouncer to slowly fall onto the ground without making a sound.

After exchanging looks. Klein turned the knob, pushed open the side door, and stepped inside. Mike Joseph lowered his body and quickly followed.

*Why are you so skilled… You're just a reporter! *Klein lampooned under his breath, walking briskly but at a rapid pace along the paved corridor.

Suddenly, they heard Lopez's voice.

"Tell Capim not to send anyone over in the next few days!

Capim? Send anyone? Klein looked at Mike and found him looking equally puzzled.

At that moment, they heard Lopez's footsteps that were headed towards the corridor.

"Let's go!" Klein tugged Mike and ran for the exit without turning back.

During this process, he closed the side door and broke the lock in passing. It could prevent the people inside from coming out for a while.

Then, as if nothing had happened, they hurriedly walked through the hall and approached the exit while hearing faint, angry voices.

After reaching the streets, Mike heaved a sigh of relief and said in amazement and sincerity, "I've experienced many similar scenarios, but not once was it as simple and relaxed as it was today.

"Thank you. I need to return to find out who Capim is."

As he spoke, he took out his wallet, fished out a five-pound note, and muttered, "But frankly, your price is really expensive. It's worth more than half a week's salary."

"But you can claim for reimbursement, right?" Klein answered with a grin. Following that, he asked in concern, "Aren't you afraid that Lopez will find your newspaper firm and get the police to arrest you?"

"That's a fake ID card." Mike Joseph shrugged with a gesture of familiarity.

"…" Klein could only admire him.

After watching Mike board a carriage and leave, he walked diagonally across the street, waited for a public carriage and kept an eye out for anyone chasing after him.

At that moment, a rental carriage slowly approached and stopped in front of him.

A middle-aged man in a black coat stepped out the carriage and nodded at Klein.

He had blue eyes, a thin face, and gray temples. It was the same old gentleman that Klein had seen in the Golden Rose.

He's not a customer of the Golden Rose… He's just like us… Klein suddenly came to this realization.

"Hello, I'm Detective Isengard Stanton. I'm assisting the police in this case. Can we have a chat?" The middle-aged man pointed at the carriage tracks.

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CHAPTER 272
OBSERVING EACH OTHER

Detective? A colleague… However, the fact that he's able to assist the police in dealing with such a serious case shows that he truly is a well-known detective, at least within Sivellaus Yard… Eh, isn't the serial killer involved in devil worship supposed to be handed over to the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind? All the police department needs to do is send a few assistants, so why would they need to seek the help of a private detective?

Yes, the eleven serial murders must've caused a sensation. Sivellaus Yard is under a lot of pressure, and they aren't willing to just wait in misery?

Many thoughts flashed through Klein's mind, but on the surface, he revealed a smile.

"Alright."

He boarded Isengard Stanton's rented carriage and saw a young man with brown hair inside.

"This is my assistant," Isengard, who had a thin and angular face, introduced. "Please, have a seat."

He didn't close the carriage's door, nor did he let the carriage driver drive the horse forward to show that he meant no harm.

Klein deliberately sat down uneasily and asked worriedly, "What would you like to talk about, Mr. Stanton?"

Isengard took out a dark pipe and said, "I want to know what you've learned from following Ma'am. Lopez. Did you hear or discover anything?"

"This… I'm also a detective, and you should know that we have confidentiality agreements in this business," Klein deliberately replied as though he was in a dilemma.

"I'm asking you on behalf of Sivellaus Yard. This has nothing to do with a confidentiality agreement." Isengard rubbed the pipe with his thumb. "A pound, um… How about two pounds?"

Having learned a lesson from the previous incident with Meursault, together with the fact that there was no need to keep it a secret, Klein replied without hesitation, "Sure."

"Alright." Isengard smiled and took out two one-pound notes from his pocket.

Klein acted as though he was recalling something before frankly saying, "We only heard one sentence. Ma'am. Lopez attempted to order her subordinates to tell Capim that he's not to send anyone over in the next few days."

"Capim?" Isengard nodded, seemingly enlightened. "Got it."

"You know Capim?" Klein didn't hide his surprise.

Isengard handed the notes over and said with a faint smile, "He's one of the most controversial magnates in Cherwood Borough."

"In Backlund, innocent girls often go missing along deserted streets, and after a long time, they might be chanced upon in all sorts of legal or illegal brothels. A lot of rumors point to Capim as the criminal honcho filled with blood and filth on his hands, but due to a lack of evidence, he remains free to this date. Furthermore, he knows a lot of important people."

If that's true, then this fellow should die a thousand times over… Klein nodded, sighed, and said, "This is Loen, this is Backlund, Mr. Stanton, I shall bid you farewell."

"Thank you for your cooperation." Isengard got up midway as a polite gesture to send him off. "By the way, your fighting skills are excellent. Maybe we'll have a chance to work together in the future. How should I address you?"

"Sherlock Moriarty," Klein answered briefly and got off the carriage.

Only when he boarded a newly arrived tracked carriage did Isengard Stanton instruct his assistant to close the door and order the carriage driver to head towards Hillston Borough.

Turning his head to the side, he looked out of the window. The gray-haired elderly gentleman had put away his dark pipe, pulled out a brass ornament from his pocket, slowly stroking it in his hand.

The brass ornament was a pocket-sized open book with a vertical eye in the center.

"The appearance and getup of Mr. Moriarty from just now were a bit out of place. He wore very cultured gold-rimmed glasses, but he had deliberately grown a beard around his mouth, making him look crude and barbaric. This is not quite in line with the norm. In this day and age, people who wear gold-rimmed glasses tend to care a lot about their image, the image of having knowledge and bearing. Maybe he's trying to hide something… Of course, it's also possible that he's a gentleman with an unusual aesthetic sense…" Isengard seemed to be talking to himself, but he also seemed to be teaching his assistant.

At that moment, Klein who was sitting on the carriage mumbled to himself silently as he leaned against the wall, *That Detective Isengard Stanton is problematic. Ever since I activated my Spirit Vision, he had a blue color of rational thought and indifference and maintained a purple color of*

spirituality dominance. There weren't many other colors of emotion appearing.

For normal people, unless they're wholeheartedly focused on studying a difficult problem, it's very difficult to maintain similar states for extended periods of time. Other emotions will inevitably appear, the difference being the issue of how long they can remain in that state.

Yes… Either Detective Isengard Stanton is one such genius at observation and reasoning with extraordinary talent, or he's a Beyonder?

The tracked public carriage had two floors as it ferried more than forty passengers towards the Backlund Bridge area. Klein gradually reined in his thoughts and cast his gaze out the window and admired the two to three-story buildings on the other side of the road.

Occasionally he could see brown houses five or six stories high, a sign of Backlund's latest trend and of the kingdom's most advanced construction technology.

After a transfer, Klein arrived at Iron Gate Street and got off the carriage opposite the Bravehearts Bar.

As it wasn't the peak period at the bar yet, the moment he entered, he saw Kaspars drinking at the bar.

The old man with the brandy nose had requested for a glass of Langsky Proof, his eyes narrowed in satisfaction as he savored the fragrance of the malt and the burning sensation in his throat.

Klein moved closer, rapped the counter, and asked with a smile, "Is Maric here?"

At the same time, he had one hand in his pocket as he gripped Azik's copper whistle, using his spirituality to shield its negative effects.

Before he finished his sentence, he felt gazes sweep past him. It was evident that they were observing him.

By the time he finished asking his question, the gazes moved away from him and focused on Kaspars.

The old man with the huge scar on his face opened his eyes, and when he saw that it was Klein, he said in a bad mood, "He didn't come. He didn't come yesterday either."

He didn't come… Klein let out a breath of relief, no longer using his spirituality to wrap Azik's copper whistle.

When I mentioned Maric, someone looked at me… When they heard that I was asking him for his whereabouts, the gaze shifted again… Someone is also looking for Maric… Klein resisted the urge to turn around and observe as he analyzed the abnormality.

Combined with an original doubt of his, he felt that the question now had a general answer to it.

I was puzzled last week—why would a Sequence 5 Miss Bodyguard accept a three-day protection mission for 1000 pounds? This isn't to say that the price is too low, but rather that someone of that level already counts as a powerful person. In the Church of the Goddess, she's qualified to be a Nighthawk deacon or a diocese bishop. If she can gain the favor of a Holy Artifact, she can even compete for the position of an archbishop or a high-ranking deacon…

Among the various secret organizations and intelligence agencies, Sequence 5 also implies that the person would be the person-in-charge of a borough or at least the number two or three. Even if it were a Beyonder who isn't a part of any organization, a person with such strength would be able to establish a small organization of their own…

No matter which point of view it was from, Miss Bodyguard could enjoy tributes from her subordinates, so there was no need for her to personally "take the job"…

At the time, I thought that I had most likely hired a Sequence 6 "security guard" who would be able to last a little longer against the expert sent by Bakerland, creating a chance for me, but who knew that Miss Bodyguard would be so terrifyingly strong…

Judging from today's events, Miss Bodyguard and Maric are probably similar to me. Their identities are sensitive, and they have to hide away. Yes, their situation might be even worse, and they have to constantly worry about being hunted down… Tch, to be able to hunt Miss Bodyguard, even if that organization doesn't have any High-Sequence Beyonders, they must have some Holy Artifacts or multiple Sequence 5 members…

Of course, this is just my hunch. Perhaps it has to do with the exposure of Maric as a Beyonder and he's now targeted by the Machinery Hivemind squad…

After some thought, Klein said with regret, "Is that so. I was planning on playing cards with him."

Upon hearing something that didn't match Klein's usual manner of speech, Kaspars was alarmed. He didn't look around either, but chortled and said, "I'll be having a card game tonight. Texas, do you want to join in?"

"No, I just want to play till dinner. Sigh, I think I'll just head home." Klein sighed and left the Bravehearts Bar without even ordering anything to drink.

He had intended to ask Kaspars about other Beyonder gatherings, but in that situation, he carefully abandoned the idea.

In fact, he could've gone to a card room or some relatively sealed area to talk with Kaspars, but just to be safe, he decided to wait until next time.

Klein was in no hurry to return home. Instead, he went to the one-bedroom apartment he rented in East Borough and started divining above the gray fog to confirm that no one was following him.

After easing his mind, he reached Minsk Street before it was completely dark and found all sorts of subscribed newspapers crammed into his mailbox.

I was in a hurry to leave today, so I didn't even have time to read it. At the Quelaag Club, I had a good meal after shooting practice and took a nap, before being forced to play a few tennis matches with Talim. Heh, my skills aren't good enough, but my physical fitness can make up for that… He mumbled silently as he opened the door and went inside before twisting the gas lock.

He brought the newspapers into the living room and sat on the sofa. He lit the wall lamp and started reading.

Klein first read through the Backlund Morning Post and immediately flipped to the fifth page and saw an advertisement. It was an advertisement for the Ernst Firm's purchase of goods!

The prices were 7 pence per liter of flour, 1 soli of butter, 6 pence per pound of lard, 1 soli 3 pence per pound of cream, 8 soli per pound of marquis black tea…

In other words, there would be a Beyonder gathering in the same place at eight in the evening tomorrow. The code to the door is to knock seven times heavily, one time lightly, six long intervals, and one short interval in that order… The remaining 3 and 8 are meaningless… Klein interpreted the content, leaned back against the sofa, and began to look forward to the gathering tomorrow evening.

He wanted to sell some formulas to see if he could buy the corresponding ingredients or items!

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CHAPTER 273
HANDING OUT A FORMULA

Wednesday night, five minutes to eight. In an alley behind Bravehearts Bar.

Klein circled around for a while based on his memories before finally finding the house with the dark candlelights.

He was disguised today in a grayish-blue worker's uniform, cap, and a beard so that no one would connect him to the guy who had tried his luck by buying Black Snake's item.

It would be best if Eye of Wisdom and the Apothecary don't recognize me. Otherwise, a newbie who had relied on luck to become a Beyonder and was able to come up with several potions after a week would definitely be suspicious. Klein put his hands in his pockets and felt for Azik's copper whistle, the ordinary tarot cards, and the charms he had replenished.

His uniform was specially modified by a tailor. There were many small pockets with metal bottles filled with herbs powder and extract essence.

After taking a deep breath and slowly exhaling, Klein took out the metal mask that could only cover half his face and finished the first step to his disguise.

Following that, he used the Clown's ability to control his facial expression and his physical tics, as well as his gait while numbing his facial nerves. He wanted to be vastly different from his previous self.

However, I'm not sure what Eye of Wisdom relies on to recognize people. This is all I can do. Sigh, if only I was already a Faceless… But if that's the

case, I wouldn't need to join such low-level Beyonder gatherings… Klein stood outside the door in silence for a few seconds. He then raised his right hand and knocked on the door, seven hard knocks and one light one, with six long pauses and one short pause in between.

Almost without waiting, the small wooden board on the door was silently pulled open, and an eye appeared behind it. It examined the visitor from head to toe.

Two or three seconds later, the door creaked open and Eye of Wisdom's attendant handed a hooded black robe to Klein.

Klein maintained his emotionless state as he quickly put on the robe and pulled down his hood, letting the shadows cover his face.

On the way to the living room, he deliberately took steps he wasn't used to and tried his hardest to eliminate the awkwardness.

There was only one candle in the dark and silent room and quite a number of members at the gathering. Klein didn't choose a corner like the previous time. Instead, he sat on a high stool right in the center.

In short, he wanted everything about his external appearance and behavior to be completely different from the previous two times!

And it was precisely due to his identity as a Clown that gave him this domain of expertise, allowing him to reflect his own body into his mind and gain fundamental control over it.

The living room was so silent that it appeared frozen. Time passed by, and finally, Eye of Wisdom looked at the clock on the wall and said in his ancient voice, "It's time. Let's begin. We don't need to wait for our late friends."

Just as he finished his sentence, Klein immediately said with a hoarse voice, "I want to sell potion formulas.

"They are Sequence 9 Bard and Sequence 8 Light Suppliant from the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun.

"The former is 220 pounds and the latter is 450 pounds."

This was the most suitable plan that he could come up with after much consideration. The Spectator and the Telepathist potions were related to the Psychology Alchemists, a secret organization that was still active in Backlund in the Loen Kingdom. If he recklessly produced them, he might attract their attention. And the Church of Eternal Blazing Sun was blocked out by the Church of the Lord of Storms, so the corresponding Beyonders rarely appeared in Backlund and could do very little. Therefore, it was an extremely safe choice.

The potion of the Seer pathway involved Klein himself, and he certainly didn't want to reveal his characteristics.

After having experienced so many battles and watched so many battles with Beyonders, he gradually came to understand something. It was that below the high Sequences, Beyonders of different pathways had their own characteristics which didn't overlap. That was to say, each of them had their own strengths and weaknesses, and their strengths and weaknesses were all very obvious. The strengths were indeed strong, and the weaknesses were indeed weak.

For example, the Spectator pathway lacked the ability to fight in actual combat, but if they were ignored and were unconsciously misled, then no matter how strong an opponent's combat skills were, it was possible for them to die without knowing why. A clear example would be Hurricane Rear Admiral Qilangos, who clearly possessed the mystical item "Creeping Hunger" and had an overall combat strength of a Sequence 5, but he still died in a rather inexplicable manner. Most of this was thanks to Azik, but one couldn't dismiss the role of the Spectator.

Due to the fact that the majority of the Beyonder jobs below the high Sequence had distinct characteristics and obvious weaknesses with weak

bodies, if one could conceal one's strengths and understand the situation of their enemies beforehand, it wasn't impossible for them to defeat someone stronger. In extreme cases, there was still a very small chance of a Sequence 9 killing a Sequence 5.

Of course, this was a perfect hypothesis, but in reality, it was almost impossible. Sequence 5 was already considered strong, and the corresponding Beyonder powers could be considered miraculous. Strengths could effectively cover up weaknesses, but before reaching Sequence 6, it was very difficult to cause any effect on them.

On the other hand, many of the Beyonders below high Sequences were very afraid of being attacked by a group, even if their opponents were all below their own Sequence. This was because once one became flustered, their attempts to avoid a fault would lead to failure of another. Their weaknesses could lead to fatal outcomes.

These problems were why Shepherds were ranked first below high Sequences. They were so all-rounded that if they combined and matched their Beyonder powers well enough, they would almost have zero shortcomings.

After I advance to the Sequence 7, I'll have all sorts of magical Beyonder powers. Then, even if I encounter a Sequence 6, I'll be able to contend against them for a while, and I might even be able to win… If I encounter a Sequence 5, there might still be a chance of escaping… As his thoughts raced, Klein looked around, waiting for someone to speak.

If Bard and Light Suppliant can't be sold, then I can only go for second best and consider selling Spectator and Telepathist. In consideration of Beyonder Characteristics Indestructibility and Conservation… The formula of my own pathway definitely shouldn't be sold. The Witch pathway wouldn't as well, for it would lead to many tragic cases. Whether it's Instigator or Witch, they're the type that necessitates committing evil deeds… Klein was a little nervous, but his face remained expressionless as he waited.

"Actually, I can consider buying it." At that moment, the chubby Apothecary laughed. "I can also accept another apprentice and give him these two formulas, making him specialize in praying for light to shine on my herbs. Perfect! How extravagant!"

His words broke the momentary silence in the room. A man in the corner, who had his hood pulled very low, spoke in a deliberately sharp voice, "Perhaps I can give it to my child. At least it's stronger than my Sequence."

"Sequence 9, 200 pounds, Sequence 8, 400 pounds; if you agree, we have a deal."

To be able to take out 600 pounds at one go means he's quite rich. That's enough to buy a house in Tingen City… Klein pretended to think, looked at the other members at the gathering, and observed their reactions.

Noticing that no one had the urge to raise the price, and that the other party's bid had reached his bottom line, Klein thought for a while and said, "I'll tag on an additional request: you cannot sell these two formulas in this gathering, but you are free to do as you wish elsewhere."

The man said sharply, "Alright, Mr. Eye of Wisdom will bear witness."

Klein didn't know how to prove that the formula was real, but he didn't want to ask as it would expose the fact that he hadn't participated in many gatherings. Therefore, he silently pulled up his robe and took out the two potion formulas he had written long ago and handed it to an attendant beside him.

The attendant didn't walk to the corner. Instead, he went to the single sofa in the center and handed the folded paper over to the Eye of Wisdom.

The old gentleman spread out the paper and, without taking an extra look at it, placed it on a small round table beside him.

Then, he took out a handkerchief and wiped his right palm. From his pocket, he took out a ring inlaid with many tiny diamonds.

This ring was complicated and exquisite in design. In the middle of the ring was a dark green gem that looked like an eye. Just by looking at it from a distance, Klein felt his head swell and his body turn uncomfortable; it was just like back when he was taking his math examination.

Eye of Wisdom solemnly wore the ring on his right middle finger and then closed his eyes, as if he was preparing something.

Suddenly, the emerald-green gem on the ring bloomed with a resplendent golden color which was as bright as the sun.

Eye of Wisdom quickly extended his right hand and let the gem touch the potion formula written by Klein.

The rays of golden light became purer until they eventually turned into a holographic projection.

"Authentic and effective!" Eye of Wisdom announced in a low voice. He immediately removed the ring from his finger, not daring to wear it for another second.

His tone sounds just like a notary… That ring is the most prized item in Mr. Eye of Wisdom's collection, Sealed Artifact 2-081? It emulates the powers of a Notary? Klein watched on thoughtfully, feeling a little covetous.

After the "notarization," the deal was quickly concluded, and Klein received a thick wad of cash, all in ten-pound notes.

After counting the bills three times, he didn't fold and put them in his pocket. Instead, he held them in the palm of his hand and waited for an opportunity to spend them.

He planned on observing for a moment to ensure that there was nothing he needed before speaking again to mention his desire to purchase things.

At that moment, the Apothecary looked around and said, "I brought a few bottles of sedatives."

He really brought it? I've already forgotten all about it… In order to be different from his past self, Klein could only pretend that he wasn't around.

After shouting a few times and seeing that there was no response, the Apothecary muttered, "That guy didn't come this time? Maybe he's dead somewhere."

Thank you for your 'blessings'…But it's delightful that you failed to recognize me… Klein heaved a sigh of relief

The Apothecary habitually asked for Spring of the Elves marrow crystals again, but it was in vain as usual.

Moments after he shut up, a woman whose face was completely shrouded by her hood said with two boxes at her feet, "I have two weapons with Beyonder effects."

This must be the lady who sold the inscribed steel sword the last time, right? My spirituality instincts as a Seer tells me that… she has another two similar weapons? Backing her is some Beyonder armament organization, right… Well, maybe she has an Artisan behind her, also known as Sequence 6 of the Machinery Specialist and Savant pathway… Klein looked over with anticipation.

He had agreed to give The Sun a Beyonder weapon worth 500 to 700 pounds, which could effectively his combat ability. He didn't promise the specific type and characteristics, so long as it was similar and could be used, he could buy it. In any case, the Sun wasn't picky about it.

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CHAPTER 274
BEYONDER WEAPON

The woman with the hooded face looked around her and said, "The two weapons this time are easy to carry around.

"One of them is the Whip of Slowness. It's a replica of a particular mystical item. It can constantly create formless restraints, influencing your opponent bit by bit, slowing down his actions gradually. The longer you last in battle, the more effective it would be.

"It can still be used for two years. 450 pounds, or the potion formula for Barbarian."

This whip sounds pretty good, and it feels like the spider silk ability of the Demoness of Pleasure… However, would it seem a little strange for Little Sun to use a whip? Klein asked in a hoarse voice, "Can this invisible binding effect affect spirit-type creatures? For example, wraiths?"

The lady shook her head slowly. "No."

Without waiting for any further questions, she continued introducing, "The second weapon is called the Axe of Hurricane. It can raise the user's agility and running speed. There's also a 15% chance of inflicting a numbing effect to the enemy and a 5% chance of producing a bolt of lightning. If used in a thunderstorm, the chance of the lightning bolt will be raised to 50%.

"This has all been verified through experimentation and concluded through copious amounts of data.

"This weapon's effects can last for no more than a year. 520 pounds or the potion formula to Barbarian."

This is much stronger than the Whip of Slowness. If it wasn't for the fact that it only has the Beyonder effects for a year, it probably wouldn't be this price… Right, according to the description of Little Sun and the scene I vaguely saw, in the air above the City of Silver and the surrounding area, there are always flashes of lightning. The highest frequency is during daytime and the lowest frequency is during nighttime. This is very similar to a so-called thunderstorm environment…

If it's really effective, then this Axe of Hurricane would be a truly mystical item in the hands of Little Sun. Each strike has a 50% chance of blasting out lightning. It would be absolutely formidable!

Even if that doesn't work, looking at the most basic Beyonder effects of the Axe of Hurricane, it's still quite a good weapon, and it meets the needs of Little Sun… As for the problem that it can only be used for a year, it's not a big problem to solve. In one year, with Little Sun's digestion rate and City of Silver's Beyonder resources, as long as he has the potion formulas, he would at least be Sequence 6 by then. At that point in time, he'll definitely need to replace his weapon!

As his mind whirled, Klein basically determined that he was buying the Axe of Hurricane.

At that moment, the Apothecary muttered, "Is an axe easy to carry around? I feel like I've heard a joke, and I think it might be more appropriate to make a wrench. Say, can't you sell stuff like revolvers with Beyonder effects?"

"I will try my best to collect similar items." The woman emphasized the word "collect." "Alright, friends who are willing to buy one of these weapons, please make a bid."

Before Klein could even speak, he heard a male voice from the long sofa.

"Axe of Hurricane, 520 pounds."

The woman waited a few seconds before asking again, "Is there anyone else who wants to bid?"

"530 pounds." Klein added ten pounds.

The man immediately replied, "550 pounds."

…This… Little Sun, if he raises it to more than 600 pounds, I won't be buying it. I'll get you a new whip! With a definite strategy in mind, Klein called out very calmly, "560 pounds."

He tried to make it appear that no matter what offer was made, he could add on an additional ten pounds.

And the 600 pounds he had just earned was just enough to put invisible pressure on the other party.

Upon hearing the latest price, the man fell silent and shrugged.

"Alright then, it's yours."

Phew… Klein secretly heaved a sigh of relief.

"Is there anyone else who wants to bid for the Axe of Hurricane?" the woman asked again, but the room was silent.

"Sold!" The lady didn't hesitate any longer and handed the box next to her right foot to the attendant.

The attendant had the Eye of Wisdom appraise it before bringing it to Klein, Money was handed over in exchange for the item.

Putting away the remaining four ten-pound notes, Klein opened the box and saw an axe that could be attached to one's back or tucked in one's belt.

Its entire body was iron black in color, thick, and sturdy, with a sharp edge. In his Spirit Vision, it was clear that the creator had used a large number of spiritual materials.

There were also many symbols and magic runes on the surface of the axe. They were embedded inside, turning into lightning and hurricane patterns. When Klein reached out to touch it, he felt a faint pricking pain.

He nodded and placed the box on his lap.

It can be exchanged for the true root and juice of a Mist Treant. My Magician potion is only missing the spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther… I've made a good deal of money in my past few commissions, and together with my original savings and what I just have left, I have 209 pounds 5 solis and 5 pennies on me… The Beyonder ingredients corresponding to Sequence 7 are valued at 500 to 700 pounds… Heh, I still had to sell formulas or knowledge… Yes, I'll take the time to check on Leppard this week and confirm the progress of his bicycle… Klein stopped bidding and quietly watched from the sidelines.

Later on, someone bought the Whip of Slowness for 480 pounds, and a Beyonder ingredient called Heart of Featherman wasn't sold because its price reached 1,600 pounds and nobody wanted it.

According to his knowledge of mysticism, Klein knew that this Beyonder ingredient would be classified in the category of Sequence 6.

In the following transactions, more failed than succeeded. After all, most of the Beyonders who came to the gathering had a specific purpose, and they wouldn't casually waste money and resources. They weren't like Klein, who bought any weapon as long as the Beyonder effects were good enough.

"I want to sell a formula potion. Sequence 9, Corpse Collector. 230 pounds." Towards the end, a man sitting quietly in a corner said with a deep voice.

Corpse Collector? I remember that this potion formula can only be found in the Church of the Evernight Goddess, Church of the God of Combat, and the Numinous Episcopate… Has an undercover Nighthawk sneaked in, or is he a member of the Numinous Episcopate who's trying to revive Death? Of course, it isn't that strange for low Sequence formulas to be found in the wild. This isn't a huge secret… I remember Old Neil mentioning that the formula for Corpse Collector involved a desiccated black-spotted frog… Klein controlled himself and didn't smile. He thoughtfully looked ahead and discovered that the potion formula of Corpse Collector was quickly sold.

The potion formula for Sequence 9 is very easy to sell… Before, there was just a single Sequence 8 Folk of Rage formula that failed to close several times, while my Light Suppliant formula matched with Sequence 9 Bard was sold relatively easily.

Yes, most Beyonders would collect Sequence 9 formulas if they have the money to spare. They can give their own children and students more opportunities to choose from, allowing them to walk a path that they preferred. Under this premise, if a Sequence 8 formula doesn't have the foundation Sequence 9, they would have to wait for Beyonders who are attempting to advance, and there might not even be one in one to two years. After all, the circle of Beyonders is very scattered, and most people don't know about the acting method…

Yes, they also don't know the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation and Indestructibility…

Klein silently thought and didn't speak.

After another fifteen minutes, seeing that the gathering was about to end, he asked probingly, "Who has the complete spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther?"

Silence. No one spoke in the living room.

Klein thought for a moment, then added, "I will provide payment that no Beyonder would refuse."

For example, the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation and Indestructibility. Unfortunately, I've already sworn to the Goddess that I wouldn't impart the acting method to anyone else… Uh, I've already died once. I wonder if that oath is invalid… Klein forcefully retracted his scattered thoughts, but he still didn't hear anyone speak.

"Okay, next." He deliberately made a shrug that he wouldn't normally do.

The Apothecary cleared his throat and said, "I've brought quite a few of my own medicine. Take a look at what you want. It's not expensive at all. It's just a few pounds or even a few soli."

When the lady selling Beyonder weapons heard this, she asked curiously, "I want to know if the dangerous beast in the sewers has been eliminated?"

The Apothecary snorted immediately.

"You asked the right person!"

After saying that, he spread out his hands.

"I don't know either.

"After I got someone to make a police report, I haven't been to the sewers ever since."

Bro, you're asking for a beating… It must've been hard for you to grow up so healthily… From the looks of it, it was very wise of you to choose the Apothecary job! Klein couldn't help but lampoon in Chinese.

The woman took a deep breath and slowly exhaled without saying a word.

When all the strange medicine the Apothecary had brought were sold, Eye of Wisdom announced that the gathering was over.

He delegated Klein to be fifth to leave, through a secret passage in the basement.

From the looks of it, Eye of Wisdom didn't recognize me either… With some relief, Klein took off his hooded robe and tossed it to the attendant. Then, he walked out of the passage and skilfully circled around it.

After confirming that no one was following him, he took off his iron mask, left the secluded street, took the box containing the Axe of Hurricane, and headed straight to East Borough.

…

There were no gas lamps on Black Palm Street in East Borough, and after dark, it was like an abyss.

In a particular apartment here, Klein sealed the room with a wall of spirituality, then he summoned himself and carried the Axe of Hurricane above the gray fog.

If it had been a little heavier, I wouldn't have been able to carry it with me even if I had Mr. Azik's copper whistle to reinforce my spirit. Then, I would have to switch to a sacrificial ritual… Klein mumbled, sending his thoughts to the illusory star corresponding to The Sun.

"The World has sacrificed the weapon to me. You can prepare the bestowment ritual."

…

City of Silver.

Upon seeing the gray fog and hearing Mr. Fool's instructions, Derrick Berg immediately sat up and rushed to prepare.

Before holding the bestowment ceremony, he silently took out his knight's sword and made a few vertical slashes to ease his anticipation.

Would it be a straight sword, a broadsword, or a rapier? Derrick stopped without realizing, unable to stop himself from thinking, and subconsciously pictured himself using that powerful weapon.

After a while, during the ritual, he saw the Beyonder weapon that belonged to him.

It was an axe.

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CHAPTER 275
POUND FAMILY

"Dear Mr. Fool, please tell Mr. World that I'll try to gather the Mist Treant's true root and juice as soon as possible."

After receiving The Sun's reply, Klein nodded indiscernibly and muttered to himself, "From the looks of it, he's rather satisfied with the weapon.

"Even without the additional effects from the environment, the Axe of Hurricane is still quite a formidable weapon."

He had passed the information regarding the Beyonder weapon's characteristics and limitations to The Sun. He didn't describe it directly in order to avoid sounding naggy. He needed to maintain his image.

After doing all of this, Klein didn't stay any longer and immediately returned to the real world, changed his clothes, and left Black Palm Street.

…

East Borough, Dharavi Street, in a cramped but lively pub.

Xio Derecha covered her nose and mouth as she squeezed in. To her, what was bad about this place wasn't just because it smelled of alcohol and sweat, but that she would easily encounter people much taller than she was. She had to face their armpits and the strong odor was nauseating.

Using a great deal of effort and even using the powers of an Arbiter, Xio finally squeezed her way to the bar counter and saw the man she was looking for.

It was a young man in his twenties. He had a face as long and thin as a horse. His eyebrows were messy and ferocious, but his facial features were relatively soft.

He was gulping down alcohol and laughing loudly with the patrons around him.

"Williams, I have something to talk to you about." Xio banged on the wooden counter.

This boorish action immediately attracted many angry gazes. However, they quickly retreated under the stern gaze of an Arbiter.

"Oh, Xio, I haven't seen you in days. Let me see, it's been a week, no—at least three weeks. Care for a drink? Half and Half?" Williams said, half drunk and half surprised.

Half and Half was one of the most popular alcoholic beverages in East Borough, made from malt beer and fortified grape wine, and because it has precisely made up of two constituents of equal proportion, it was known as Half and Half.

"Are you really going to let me drink?" Xio pricked up her brows.

"No, he doesn't!" the boss, who was wiping the glasses, hurriedly answered on Williams's behalf.

He clearly remembered how deadly the girl would become when she got drunk. She would use her fists to persuade the guests to quit drinking and throw them out one by one.

The corner of Williams's mouth twitched as he spread out his hands and said, "Go on, why are you looking for me?"

He was one of East Borough's informants and was connected to several gangs.

Xio frowned and said, "Williams, can't you quit drinking? Save your money, marry a nice girl, and come home every day to hot water, food, and warm greetings. You can share all the things you've seen in the day with her, and she can tell you about the trivial things that happened in your house, and there will be cute kids who will kiss you on the cheek and play around you. Isn't such warmth nice?"

She was able to gain a quick foothold in Backlund's East Borough, all thanks to Williams's help, so she had always wanted him to be better off.

"Warmth?" Williams scoffed. "It's built on the money I bring back, and I've seen through the farce. If I could bring home twenty soli a week, I'm sure my family would be warm and just as you described it to be, but if not, Lord, the screams and insults from the woman, the cries and shrieks of children, would drive me crazy!

"My mom is a good example. Every time my old man comes home, he'll beat me up and make a ruckus, so if that's the case, I might as well use the soli and the pence on me to trade for drinks. No one cares how much I earn here; everyone drinks and chats, and the mood is really good. If I want women, there are cute street girls outside. They wouldn't quarrel with you."

Xio smirked and said, "You really are an incorrigible believer of the Lord of Storms. One day, you'll die from alcoholism or some strange disease."

"At least I've enjoyed life," Williams replied without minding what she said. "I haven't worked in almost three days, so I'm not going to give you a discount."

Xio stopped persuading him. She stroked her short, disheveled blond hair and handed him the portrait of Lanevus that Audrey had given her.

"Help me keep an eye out for this man. Find him as soon as possible.

"Here are different portraits of him."

Williams spread out the piece of paper in his stupor and glanced at it before tsking. "He looks too ordinary, and there are so many people in East Borough. There are people who die at any moment. Some leave, some come, and others become vagrants. It'll be difficult to find him."

"In short, help me keep an eye out. Notify me immediately if you find anyone who looks like him." Xio took out a five-soli bill and handed it to him. "Here's some beer money. If you can find the person in the portrait, I'll… uh, give you another ten pounds."

"Ten pounds?" Williams whistled. "Xio, when did you become so generous? Or is this person worth more?"

"That's how much his reward is worth. Ten pounds for providing clues." Xio pretended to look around the pub and answered, "Don't forget about this matter, I'll come back in a few days time."

She had already run through nearly half of East Borough and issued the mission to the gang leaders and informants she knew, and she had paid several pounds in advance.

As long one of them succeeds, I'll earn it all back. All those profits! Xio silently cheered herself on and walked out of the pub with her nose and mouth covered.

At that moment, the scene gradually turned chaotic due to some conflict between a few drunkards.

Xio glanced over in exasperation, then raised her voice and shouted, "Stop!"

A sense of dominance reverberated within the pub, and it was as though the drunkards had met their nemesis as they hurriedly sat down. Some of them even hugged their heads and squatted on the ground.

Phew, I wonder when I'll advance to Sheriff… Xio sighed, feeling a mix of satisfaction and anticipation.

…

On Thursday morning, Klein took the long trip to St. George Borough which was like another city altogether to show some concern for his first investment.

With his last tip and the revelation from Roselle's manuscript, Leppard was progressing very quickly on the bicycle project and had already built a crude prototype.

This was very much in line with Klein's impression of bicycles.

After a trial ride, Klein offered a few suggestions for improvements, saying he would disburse the second investment payment next week, and expressed his hope of bringing in new investors as soon as possible, so that the project could enter an industrial phase.

The only problem was that Leppard believed that he was the inventor and had the right to name the product.

He wasn't satisfied with the term "bicycle" and intend to adopt the more popular term, "bike."

Klein didn't care.

At noon, he returned to 15 Minsk Street, but before he could take off his hat, he heard a series of illusory pleas.

*Miss Justice? She has collected the information on the abject nobles so quickly? *Still in thought, Klein prepared to enter the living room and head to the second floor.

At that moment he heard the doorbell and when he opened the door, he saw Julianne, the maid from the Sammers next door.

"Mr. Moriarty, Mrs. Sammer would like to invite you to a Sunday luncheon. There will be a lot of neighbors attending," the maid said as if she was reciting something.

After his return last night, Klein had handed the portable camera to Mrs. Sammer and exchanged a few words with her, but he hadn't received any indication of a luncheon.

That's right, according to the magazines, the middle class wouldn't invite anyone to an event in person, but instead, they formally sent their servants or maids to send the invitation… This is in line with Mrs. Sammer's style… Klein was puzzled at first before he immediately came to a realization, so he promised to punctually attend on Sunday.

*Who wouldn't want to have a free lunch? And Mr. and Mrs. Sammer aren't very difficult people to get along with, as long as you don't mind their showing off… *Klein secretly added in his heart.

He watched as Julianne left. He closed the door behind him and walked toward the stairs, his eyes scanning the slightly messy living room, dining room, and kitchen.

It's been a few days since I've cleaned up… I'm a bachelor, so it's not bad that I'm able to maintain a level of tidiness such as this… I have too many secrets, and I might even suffer an attack. It's not too good to just hire an in-house maidservant for chores. Yes… I should discuss this with Mrs. Sammer on Sunday and ask her to send her maid to clean up twice a week, and I'll pay for it… Many tenants and landlords have had similar agreements… Klein calmly walked into the bedroom on the second floor and drew the curtains.

After entering the fog, he found that the prayer had indeed come from Miss Justice.

This girl of blue blood sat on a piano stool, her hands on the keys. She wasn't playing the piano; instead, she was whispering the honorific name of The Fool that doesn't belong to this era.

“…I've gathered the information regarding the abject nobles. I'm requesting permission to hold a sacrificial ritual and seek your help in passing it to Mr. World."

That's quick… as expected of a "professional”…Klein immediately responded.

Audrey, who had just returned from the royal coat-of-arms office and experts in this field, completed the sacrificial ritual with a little unfamiliarity as she threw the thick manuscript into the illusory door.

"I'll pass it to The World." Klein's tone was indifferent as he cut off the connection.

This time, he was in no hurry to return to the real world. Instead, he flipped through the manuscript and found the part pertaining to the Pound family.

The Pound family had indeed obtained the title of viscount from the Battle of the Violated Oath. After that, they were loyal to the royal family, and they had quite a bit of power in the army and their own fiefdom.

However, thirty-two years ago, two of the family's heirs died from serious illnesses, one after another. At that time, the old viscount had no choice but to bring the child of a distant relative home.

Not long after, the old viscount passed away. As the child was still young, under the enticement and instigation of the servants, he changed the butler and turned foppish.

In just eight years he had lost most of his fortune and was reduced to a baron. Even the family's house in Backlund was sold.

In the years that followed, his title was reduced once again to that of a baronet.

Died of serious illnesses? Their corpses are probably nowhere to be found. They should all be in that innermost room in the underground structure, outside that bloody door… The old viscount must've deliberately concealed the matter, preventing the royal family, military or churches to investigate… From the looks of it, the Pound family must've discovered the underground structure from the Fourth Epoch about thirty years ago. Perhaps, the underground secret door was built by them… but there are more than two corpses in that room… There were others who had entered in ancient times to probe the area?

Well, I'll have to talk to Baronet Pound in a way that won't reveal my identity…

Klein stopped thinking and looked at the last paragraph. He saw what he wanted: "Baronet Pound, currently living at 29 Sivellaus Street, Empress Borough."

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CHAPTER 276
RAFTER POUND

Sivellaus Prefecture was located west of the Loen Kingdom, across the Hornacis mountain range from the Intis Republic. And in Backlund, there was a street named after it, on the edge of Empress Borough, where the headquarters of the capital's police department was located.

Many people chose to settle down here for the peace of mind, and Rafter Pound was one of them.

The baronet stood by the closed window in his warm activity room at Unit 29, in his cotton quilted pajamas, staring diagonally across the street at Sivellaus Yard.

He was in his early forties, but the sides of his hair had turned white. He had puffy eyes and clear wrinkles on his face. His body constantly emitted the smell of alcohol.

On the floor behind Rafter lay some torn lingerie, and opposite it was a burning fireplace.

The baronet raised his glass and gulped the rest of the liquid in it. Then, he walked slowly to the door and returned to his bedroom to get some sleep.

As there was no pipe to transfer the heat from the fireplace, he felt the bone-chilling chill of late autumn as soon as he left the activity room.

"Damn it!" Rafter Pound cursed under his breath as he staggered to the bedroom door and twisted the handle.

The bedroom was dark, with only a faint crimson glow shining in.

Rafter was about to close the door behind him and collapse into bed when his eyes suddenly froze.

A figure was sitting quietly on a chair beside the curtain!

The figure wore a pair of grayish-blue pants and a cap. The entire person was completely hidden in the shadows.

Sensing Baronet Pound's gaze, the man slowly raised his head and looked over.

His face was painted red, yellow, and white, looking like the funniest clown!

Rafter was about to shout and run when he saw a revolver aimed at him and heard two deep and hoarse sentences.

"I advise you not to do anything unwise.

"If you cooperate, I won't harm you, and I won't take away your belongings —if you still have any left."

Rafter Pound's expression changed a few times, and he very obediently closed the bedroom door. Then, he half raised his hands and sat on the edge of the bed.

"You, what do you want from me?" He hiccuped in his drunken stupor, and his body trembled slightly as he reminded, "Sivellaus Yard is just across the street!"

"I know, but I think I'm closer to you than you are to Sivellaus Yard." Disguised as a clown, Klein had changed his voice and tone as he warned, "And my purpose is just to ask you a few questions."

Before he came to Sivellaus Street, he had divined if there would be any danger in making this trip in the mysterious space above the gray fog and had obtained an answer that it was very safe.

"Questions?" Rafter's lips trembled as laughed bitterly, "Here we go again… Am I never going to escape this nightmare?"

"Have there been many people coming to you with questions?" Klein continued the topic.

"No, not only questions! After my uncle, the honorable old viscount, passed away, too many things have happened to me. The amiable old butler resigned for no reason and has vanished. Those servants and maids would change one after the other without warning, becoming unfamiliar and cold. They were looking for something, yes, they were looking for something, I wasn't even ten back then. All I could do was watch, and I didn't dare tell anyone. I was afraid that I would never wake up again!" Rafter replied as though he was on the brink of collapse.

Looking for something? Were they searching for the underground structure, or the treasures of the Pound family, such as the Beyonder characteristics and mystical items buried near the evil spirit? The royal family and the churches must've realized this as the higher-ups must know about the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation and Indestructibility! Since the Pound family was in ruins, these things should've been taken back, right? Unless the old viscount paid a huge price and bought some other rare Beyonder characteristics and mystical items of the same Sequence to conceal the matter of the underground structure… After Klein finished listening quietly, he generated many guesses.

He seemed relaxed, but in reality, he could attack at any time.

"How long has this been going on for?"

"I don't know, I don't know. There are faces around me that I don't know. How can I be sure that the remaining people aren't also in cahoots? "Heh

heh, I pretended not to notice anything. After trembling for a few years, I was enticed by them to do drinking, sex, gambling, smoking marijuana, and all sorts of things that make me look like a piece of trash!" Rafter Pound gave a somewhat crazy laugh. "They're finally relieved and are no longer watching me. When I sold that house, whoosh! All of them left, with no idea where they went. No, they must still be secretly monitoring me, preventing me from calling the police. Right, they aren't letting me call the police!"

This fellow has some mental illness… I have no idea if what he said is true or false. In his aura, the change in his mood colors adhere to logic, but what if he just feels that he had let down the old viscount and fantasized a whole sequence of events like this to find an excuse for his degeneration. Later, he would keep telling himself that until he's utterly convinced… As a qualified keyboard warrior, Klein, who knew a little of everything, had seen similar cases in his previous life.

After thinking for two seconds, he asked, "What did these people ask you?"

"They asked me how the two children of the old viscount died. They asked me what abnormal behavior the old viscount had over the years. I wasn't even ten years old at the time, so I don't know anything!" Rafter waved his arms and growled under his breath.

"Calm down, please calm down." Klein lowered his left hand and attempted to confirm if Baronet Pound knew of the underground structure via multiple angles.

Time flew by as the question and answer session ensued. Klein said in a hoarse voice, "You really don't seem to know anything.

"I'm very sorry to bother you, but it's time for me to leave."

He stood up, bowed slightly, and appeared very well-mannered.

And almost at the same time, the excitement and appearance of having a breakdown on Rafter Pound's face vanished. His light blue eyes became abnormally deep, as though he was examining something.

When he saw the intruder about to stand up straight, he immediately reverted back to his previous performance—grief, anger, madness, bitterness, and neuroticism.

At that moment, a mysterious voice suddenly resounded in his ears.

"Crimson!"

Klein injected spirituality into a Slumber Charm and threw it at Rafter with his unarmed left hand.

Amidst crisp crackling sounds, a strong sense of serenity spread out, enveloping the baronet, causing him to shut his eyes involuntarily and fall weakly onto the bed.

"I'm sorry. The questions from before are for the comparison of what shall ensue. Next, it's the process of entering your dream and spirit channeling." Klein patted Rafter's pajamas, and with his hand on his chest, he made another bow.

Then, he used the Dream Charm and entered Rafter's dream like a Nightmare.

In the gray, fragmentary, constantly coruscating world, Klein soberly walked beside Rafter, watching him see the blank faces of the servants and maids who had no facial features as they gave off abnormal and frightening vibes. He saw Rafter turning his head only to always to see an old face silently gazing at him, watching him curl up in the corner, shivering, and him being enveloped by a shadow, little by little.

This matches what he had described earlier… Klein tried to guide the dream to make sense of the situation, but it was as though Baronet Pound

had a very serious psychological trauma over these matters. Any tiny bit of stimulation would cause him to scream and run like a madman in his dreams.

This made it impossible for Klein to get any more information.

Thus, he withdrew from the dream and cast another Slumber Charm on Rafter Pound before taking out Amantha extract and other materials, in preparation to channel his spirit in a mediumship ritual.

After responding to himself, Klein's spirituality passed through the storm of thoughts and saw the illusory image of Rafter, an illusory image based on the Body of Heart and Mind.

"What did the old viscount say to you before he died?" Klein hesitated for a moment before asking.

Rafter Pound muddle-headedly replied, "He wants me to maintain the family."

"What else?" Klein asked again in a tone of deliberate affirmation.

"He wanted me to remember the glory of the ancestors," Rafter answered blankly.

Klein nodded and asked, "What were those people looking for?"

"I don't know." Rafter gave the same answer.

Klein continued asking and compared it with the answers Pound had said before, finally coming to the conclusion that Baronet Pound had not lied, and what he had just said was true.

At this point, he didn't stay any longer. He passed through the storm of thoughts and allowed his extended spirituality to return to his body.

Next, Klein methodically tidied up the scene and tossed Azik's copper whistle a few times, using its nature to interfere with any possible divination investigations.

"Thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Baronet." After doing all of this, Klein bowed once again.

Then he turned, opened the window, jumped into the street, and disappeared into the night.

After a while, Rafter Pound suddenly opened his eyes.

Around those light blue eyes, there was a circle of ruptured capillaries!

He flipped himself up suddenly and stared at the open oriel window.

…

After making a long detour to East Borough, Klein washed his disguise and changed into normal clothes. As if nothing had happened, he returned to 15 Minsk Street in Cherwood Borough.

He didn't rest, nor did he think about what he should do with the underground structure. Instead, he once again entered the fog.

At the very end of the ancient long table, Klein slowly opened his palm, revealing several strands of brown hair. They were Rafter Pound's hair, hair he had gathered when Rafter was sleeping.

There's still the final step—confirming with divination above the gray fog… Klein silently muttered to himself, then he conjured a pen and paper. He wrote down the content that he had already thought about beforehand:

"Rafter Pound's future."

I want to see what will happen to you in the future so as to confirm the past! Klein leaned back in his chair and began to recite the divination statement.

As the ancient structure involved the six orthodox gods, he was afraid that there would be problems if he divined something directly, so he changed his way of thinking and helped Rafter Pound ask about the future!

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CHAPTER 277
FINALIZING A PLAN

"Rafter Pound's future."

Klein held onto the baronet's hair, closed his eyes, and entered a deep slumber with the help of Cogitation.

In the gray gloomy world, he saw a narrow, irregular cave. Rafter Pound, with his puffy eye bags and gray hair at his temples, was propping himself up on his elbows, crawling forward like a reptile to leave the hole.

Then, with a flash, he retrieved a black iron emblem of unknown origins and wore it on his chest.

The emblem had a scepter carved on it, as well as a hand that was holding onto the scepter tightly!

"Tudor!" Klein jerked out of the dream and sat up.

According to Miss Bodyguard's introduction, the black iron emblem was engraved with the imperial coat of arms of the Fourth Epoch's Tudor Empire royal household!

It was identical to the one he had seen in the ancient structure!

Rafter Pound is definitely not as simple as he seems to be… Klein rubbed his forehead and muttered to himself.

As a Seer, he had his own interpretation of the revelation he had received from the dream. On the one hand, he knew that it was something Rafter

Pound would do in the future, and on the other hand, he believed that it meant that Rafter Pound had a deep connection with the Tudor family!

Through the three tests of direct questioning, dream probing, and spirit channeling, Rafter Pound didn't expose any problems, nor did he make me notice that anything was amiss. If I didn't have a fourth test, I probably would've been deceived by him. Yes… Maybe, maybe he really doesn't know anything at present and that it was a true act. In the future, he might even chance upon an opportunity to form a connection with the Tudor family…

But it's more likely that he has already learned a lot from the old viscount. Without confidence, he intentionally turned decadent and acted crazy and ignorant. For him to be able to hide from my dream and spirit channeling, it should be a result of some Beyonder powers. Hmm… He probably wasn't acting at that time and was really in a muddled state. Otherwise, he would've exposed himself in front of a person like me who is very experienced in such matters…

What Beyonder powers could it be?

What Sequence number is he?

Or is he the kind that is born with certain Beyonder powers?

Klein proceeded this line of thought and soon realized he had reached a dead end. He quickly pulled himself out of this dead end and changed his angle of thinking.

Rafter Pound has a deep connection with the Tudor family…

Can I make a bold hypothesis that he's actually a descendant of the Tudor family?

If the blood relationship between him and the old viscount is real, then things are going to be interesting.

The entire Pound family is a branch of the Tudor family that changed its surname to escape pursuit?

They contributed tremendously and were conferred aristocratic titles, and they returned to the center of power, one step at a time. Meanwhile, they were secretly searching for the secret remains left behind by the Tudor Empire in Backlund.

After an unknown period of time, they finally found something. Thus, they bought what currently belongs to Millet Carter's house and built an exaggerated basement, which was used to explore the surrounding area.

Thirty to forty years ago, they found the ruins and built a secret door to it.

But, during the exploration process, an accident occurred. That evil spirit didn't recognize any of the so-called Tudor descendants at all. The two heirs of the old viscount died in that room, in the deepest corner, one after the other. Even their Beyonder characteristics and mystical items couldn't be retrieved.

Although the old viscount spent a great price to buy similar Beyonder characteristics, making it seem like the two heirs had died relatively normal deaths, the consecutive deaths made the royal household and the churches suspicious. Therefore, after the old viscount passed away, Rafter Pound deliberately exaggerated and distorted the secret investigations of the past, to frighten himself into having mental problems. He began to engage in debauchery so as to avoid the attention of others.

This can explain what previously puzzled me. How can a viscount family be placed under the control of some mysterious person without any action from the royal household and the churches? Even if controlling him was necessary, they would do it in a milder and undetectable manner. For example, using a Faceless of my Sequence 6 pathway.

A child can even sense something abnormal, much less the powerful Beyonders of the royal household and the three churches?

The reason why they were "unaware" can only be explained by the fact that they were the ones who had sent those people.

Yes… Back then, I surmised that the Tudor family and the Trunsoest family grasped the Dark Emperor pathway, so due to the need to act, they would establish dynasties to maintain the style and uniqueness of the Solomon Empire. On this point, Miss Bodyguard has indirectly proven it.

The Dark Emperor pathway's Sequence 9 is Lawyer, a Beyonder job that is extremely good at using order. Yes… Rafter Pound was able to deceive my dream and spirit channeling abilities because of this. Perhaps he's gone one step further? He cooperated with me sufficiently, so in his muddled state in the dream, he was still able to subconsciously use the loophole of order and affect the development in the direction he wishes to have.

Upon careful consideration, during the process of spirit channeling, Rafter Pound didn't seem to really lie. However, his truth was only a partial truth…"Maintain the family" and "remember the glory" can be referring to the Pound family and also the Tudor family…

Klein's train of thought became clearer bit by bit, and he had an overall assessment of the situation.

From Rafter Pound's current attitude, the evil spirit shouldn't be able to escape without any external help; otherwise, the baronet would've long thought of a way to save himself. It doesn't matter if the evil spirit would come looking for him; as long as it escapes the seal and creates a disaster, the secret of the underground ruins would be exposed to the royal household and the churches. When that happens, Rafter will definitely be implicated… The room opposite had collapsed, but it didn't affect the power that restricted the evil spirit. This means that as long as the innermost room isn't directly destroyed, the evil spirit wouldn't be able to escape…

Hmm… The plan is clear then. I would buy some explosives from Kaspars and collapse the entrance so that no one can get in, leaving the evil spirit buried underground forever. Heh, when I'm powerful enough, I can consider

finishing it and help the citizens of Backlund get rid of this latent danger and harvest some valuable items in the process…

However, how should I collapse it safely? I don't know anything… Maybe Kaspars knows a demolition expert? After all, he is a black-market weapons merchant.

Klein quickly finalized the plan and decided on finding Kaspars tomorrow evening. He would try to settle the matter of the underground ruins within the week.

As for the true relationship between the Pound family and the Tudor family, and for Rafter's abnormality, he didn't want to probe too deeply into it.

"It's none of my business!" Klein grumbled and quickly plummeted down past the gray fog and returned to the real world.

…

On Friday morning, Klein went out early as usual and pretended to be very busy.

The truth was, he had once again gone to the Quelaag Club to practice his shooting and read the newspapers. He enjoyed himself quite a bit.

At tea time, he was about to leave after staying there the entire day, but he was surprised to see Mary Gale, his former employer, and Talim Dumont, the equestrian teacher, enter the club at the same time.

They were accompanied by a number of gentlemen in double-breasted frock coats and beautiful ladies in fine makeup. Among them was the Daily Observer reporter, Mike Joseph.

"Oh, Detective Moriarty, what a coincidence." Mike, with his charming eyes but rather rough skin, took the initiative to greet him.

Klein smiled and replied, "Mr. Reporter, are you done with your investigative news?"

"It's done, thanks to your help! Let me do the introductions. This is the famous detective, Mr. Sherlock Moriarty, a good friend of Talim's." Mike waved his arm and said.

After both sides greeted each other, Mike continued, "I've roughly figured out who Capim is. I'll tell you in detail when I have the time. In short, I have every reason to believe that Siber's death was caused by a copycat killer and not by the serial killer. Haha, you will see the news of my investigations on the papers tomorrow.

"It's just as I thought." Klein smiled in response.

At that moment, Mike seemed to remember something and turned his head to Mary Gale and said, "I'll make an appointment with you for an interview regarding the air pollution situation in Backlund and its solution. However, you have to communicate with my editor-in-chief in advance to finalize the page and time."

Mary's eyes lit up.

"Alright.

"Thank you very much! Mike, why didn't I think of such a good idea?"

This is for the promotion of the National Atmospheric Pollution Council? This reporter, Mike, has quite a lot of experience after all… Although the Daily Observer isn't one of the best newspapers, its circulation is considerable… Did Mary suddenly come here today because the other members of the House of Commons who are members of this club were coming? This type of private club is indeed suitable for politics and business… Klein seemed to gain an understanding and bade farewell ahead of time.

Before becoming a Faceless, he didn't want to get involved in high-level affairs such as this.

…

Evening, in an apartment in East Borough.

After a busy day, Williams entered the small room he rented, intending to change his coat, get some money, go to the pub for a drink, and settle his dinner there.

In the gloomy darkness, he suddenly stopped putting on his coat.

He saw a shadow standing by the window, its face completely obscured by the shadow of the hood.

"Who told you to look for Lanevus?" the dark figure asked in a low, slow voice.

Williams quickly put on his coat, gulped his saliva, and said, "I have a friend, a bounty hunter."

Bounty hunters referred to adventurers who used various bounty rewards as their main source of income. There were a lot of them in East Borough and in Backlund.

"Why did he suddenly start looking for Lanevus? This is a bounty that was offered a long time ago." The black figure was extremely tall. Step by step, he approached Williams.

"I don't know. Maybe she just wanted to attempt another bounty." Williams took a very tiny step back.

The dark figure pressed hoarsely, "Who is she?"

Williams immediately entered a dilemma, but after a few seconds, he replied with a trembling voice, "Xio, Xio Derecha. I don't know where she lives."

"Very good, very honest." The black figure reached out and patted Williams's body. Without further ado, he walked towards the door.

Williams secretly heaved a sigh of relief, believing that his rich experience in the underworld had helped him.

Don't try to be brave when you shouldn't!

At that moment, he saw the shadow snap his fingers.

Pa!

Williams's thoughts froze, and his body suddenly split into pieces, scattering in all directions, splattering the ground and walls with flesh and blood.

Then, the shadow broke the gas pipe.

Amidst the sound of gas spewing out from the pipes, he picked up the candle from Williams's desk and struck it against the wick.

The black shadow left immediately. A few minutes later, the candle suddenly lit up by itself!

Boom!

The explosion wiped out everything.

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CHAPTER 278
FREE?

After dinner, in the billiard room of the Bravehearts Bar.

Dressed in a simple black coat and a dark cap, Klein held a glass of Southvill beer, closed the door behind him, and walked over to Kaspars, who was bent over the table, trying to hit the ball.

Before he could muster a smile and say hello, Kaspars stopped what he was doing, straightened up, and glanced at him.

"Maric isn't here.

"There are no other gatherings you want.

"I have nothing but weapons."

…Very familiar with what I want… Fortunately, I have a different goal today… Klein curled the corner of his lips and said, "I'm here to buy weapons."

Maric isn't here… From the looks of it, they've been exposed and are targeted by their enemies. They've decided to switch locations… Then I won't be able to contact Miss Bodyguard… And I was planning on tricking Millet Carter with Maric's zombies as my helpers… They'll keep a secret, they're obedient, and they're unafraid of death. Well, the premise of their obedience is when the influence of Azik's copper whistle is shielded… As he spoke, a series of thoughts flashed through Klein's mind.

Kaspars was slightly surprised. With a look of suspicion, he leaned against his cue stick and rubbed his brandy nose and said, "What kind of weapon are you looking to buy? Have you finished the previous bullets? That's quite a lot of practice."

No, I practiced with bullets I bought at the Quelaag Club… Klein smiled.

"I want to buy explosives, the kind that is widely used in mines."

"What do you want to do?" Kaspars blurted out as his expression turned solemn and stern. "I'm warning you, don't try to do anything condemnable! I won't allow my customers to challenge Sivellaus Yard! Of course, you don't have to buy weapons from me."

To be able to become a black market weapon merchant and live to this day, from a certain point of view, he must abide strictly by the rules. At the very least, he wouldn't sell to those crazy fellows… Klein habitually gave his evaluation from a Nighthawk's point of view and smiled. "You seem to have misunderstood something, I'm not going to blast open the door of a bank vault or try to create any sensational news. I'm helping someone with the demolition of a building, making it easier for subsequent renovations."

"Then why didn't he find a proper construction company?" Kaspars didn't let down his guard.

"Haha, that's a secret chamber. He doesn't want others to know about it." Klein switched to asking, "Do you know any reliable explosives experts? I'm not very good at this sort of thing, and I'm afraid the whole house will collapse."

When Kaspars saw that Klein was making considerations to ensure that the house remained in good condition, the doubt in his mind was immediately dispelled quite significantly.

Just as he was deliberating for an answer, an illusory voice suddenly rang out in the room.

"There's no need."

A familiar feeling came over Klein. He quickly turned around and found Miss Bodyguard sitting on a chair in the corner without him realizing it.

She was still wearing her black Gothic regal dress and matching soft hat. Her face was as pale as ever, and her blonde hair and delicate features accentuated each other.

"Good evening, Madam." Klein slightly bent his back and bowed.

"Good evening, Ma'am. Sharron." Kaspars did the same.

So her name is Sharron… Klein thoughtfully waited for her to speak.

The lady named Sharron looked at Kaspars and said, "Maric won't be coming back here again.

"If you need him for anything, leave a message according to the third method."

"Yes, Ma'am. Sharron." Kaspars, who had clearly seen a lot of things in his life, seemed to have an instinctive fear of Miss Bodyguard.

Upon hearing this, Klein interrupted, "If, I mean if—I wanted to get Maric's help, how should I get in touch with him?"

"Through Kaspars," Sharron answered simply.

"Alright." Klein spread out his hands and said, "Oh yeah, what did you mean when you said there's no need for a demolition expert?"

Sharron's blue eyes didn't waver in the slightest.

"I am one."

You are one? You're a demolition expert? Wait a minute, aren't you a Beyonder with special abilities, probably at Sequence 5? Why are you being a part-time demolition expert… Klein froze as he felt at a loss for words.

In the end, he chose to believe Miss Bodyguard as he said in deliberation, "I'm going to visit…"

Before he could finish, he looked at Kaspars. It was indicative that the ensuing topic wasn't suitable for this ordinary person.

Fundamentally, due to his body, a black market weapons dealer is indeed considered an ordinary person… Klein silently added.

Sharron looked at Kaspars and said, "Prepare the explosives. Two pounds. He'll pay."

"Yes, Ma'am. Sharron." Kaspars glanced at Klein and limped out of the billiard room, not forgetting to close the door behind him.

Seeing Miss Bodyguard looking at him silently, Klein felt like he was being watched by a ghost. He quickly organized his words and said, "I found Baronet Pound's address and visited him in the middle of the night…"

After recounting everything that Rafter Pound had told him, Klein began to deduce the process from the story.

"I think he lied in many areas, and it's impossible for a viscount family to be so easily manipulated.

"If a child can notice something abnormal, how can the royal household and the churches not sense anything?

"After Rafter Pound degenerated, he had many chances to interact with outsiders and other aristocratic members. As long as he showed a little courage, he would be able to easily resolve the problem.

"Therefore, I think he must've been hiding something, something that has a high chance of being related to the underground structure.

"From the state of his mind, it seems that the evil spirit won't be able to escape for a long period of time, so I plan to get some explosives and destroy the entrance to prevent others from getting in. Uh, I'm afraid that I might accidentally release the evil spirit."

"Yes." Miss Bodyguard Sharron didn't confirm Klein's guess, but she didn't reject it either.

At that moment, Klein hesitated and asked, "I don't know much about demolition, so I'm preparing to draw a layout and hire a demolition expert to give me the positions to lay the explosives and their corresponding weights. If-if I ask you for help again, how much would I have to pay?"

If it's too expensive, it'd better for me to look for an ordinary demolition expert. After all, I'm getting only 50 pounds from this, while Miss Bodyguard charges 1,000 pounds for three days… Klein had already made plans.

"Free." Sharron's answer was still in her usual style of being terse.

Free? Klein was shocked.

From what he knew, free things cost the most!

Sharron sat quietly for a few seconds before giving a brief explanation.

"After collapsing the entrance, I'll be the only one capable of entering and exiting.

"This was what I wished to do."

In other words, after you're confident enough, you plan on getting rid of the evil spirit and harvest the items within? In fact, destroying the entrance is to

help you eliminate any interferences or the greed of others. After all, other Beyonders of other Sequences are unable to pass through the boulders and dirt like a spirit… Yes, apart from the Apprentice pathway, but they don't know about that underground structure… Klein nodded in enlightenment.

"Deal!"

After saying that, he hurriedly added, "Hmm… Can you borrow a few more subordinates from Maric, subordinates with a tight lip? They'll be helpers to show to Millet Carter."

"Alright." Sharron didn't refuse.

Klein deliberately didn't mention making any payment for that as he smiled.

"Then, let's schedule it for ten in the morning tomorrow.

"We have to explore the surrounding terrain in advance. We can't let the explosion cause any obvious damage."

Sharron nodded slightly as her figure faded away into nothingness.

…

Saturday morning, Xio Derecha once again rode in a public carriage to the East Borough to confirm any results that her commissions might have.

While waiting for the transfer, she suddenly had the urge to buy a newspaper to read.

She took out a penny and bought a copy of the Backlund Bulletin from a paperboy next to her. She quickly read through it.

Suddenly, her eyes froze because of the news article on the third page.

"At 7:10 last night, there was a serious explosion in the apartment building at 1 Dharavi Street in East Borough. It's suspected to be a result of a gas leak. The explosion happened at Unit #03-06. The tenant died on the spot, to the point of not leaving a complete corpse. At press time, this explosion resulted in three deaths and sixteen injured…"

1 Dharavi Street… Apartment #03-06… Isn't this… Isn't this the place Williams rents? He's dead? He died from a gas leak explosion? No, no! Absolutely impossible! He would never be so extravagant and use gas, even if there was an installation there! Did he end up like this because he had just accepted my commission? But Lanevus is a wanted criminal. If he discovers that someone was looking for him, all he should need to do is move. There's no need to kill people to keep it a secret. Doing so would instead expose problems…

The way this was done is too weird and radical, it's like it was done by a lunatic…

He's clearly just a swindler…

Poor Williams…

I-I will definitely avenge you!

I'll definitely find out the truth!

Xio looked sadly and gravely at the public carriage parked in front of her and didn't choose to board it.

She knew that it would be very dangerous to head to East Borough now.

She intended to go back at once and tell Fors to get her to move to a spare rental house. Then, she would head to East Borough in a disguise and ask someone familiar to gain a preliminary understanding of the reason and find traces of the killer's tracks.

Sigh, it's true that none of Miss Audrey's commissions are without danger… I thought that as long as I didn't stop someone who is already a wanted swindler and didn't stop him from escaping, he wouldn't retaliate in such a vicious manner… I was careless. I was the one who caused Williams's death… Well, that didn't exclude the possibility that he was also gathering information on other matters, thereby bringing about disaster… Xio closed her eyes and crossed the street to the waiting area on the other side.

…

At 10:14, after confirming the surface conditions of the Fourth Epoch structure, Klein and Miss Bodyguard, Sharron, arrived outside the building at 8 Williams Street.

Sharron had already vanished, and Millet Carter saw Detective Sherlock Moriarty in his grayish-blue worker's uniform and cap and his three taciturn assistants.

"It's convenient to explore like this," Klein explained.

Millet Carter's eyes swept across the three assistants who were obviously good at fighting and nodded in satisfaction.

"Your preparations were quicker than I expected. Is one of them a snake-repelling expert?"

"Yes, they're very good at repelling snakes." Klein didn't hesitate to give an affirmative answer.

How could a zombie be afraid of being bitten by snakes?

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CHAPTER 279
EXTREME JOY BEGETS SORROW

In the dark underground structure, Klein walked around the hall with a raised lantern in his hand. He thoroughly checked to see if there were any other entrances. Of course, he didn't dare enter the tunnel that led to the innermost room, and the newly gathered snakes were, once again, blown away by a biting cold wind.

After receiving confirmation, he took the initiative to retreat to the side of the gate, where he watched, along with the three zombies, as Sharron placed explosives at different locations.

"She looks very professional." Klein sighed softly.

And without a doubt, the three zombies didn't respond to his musings.

However, there was a reason for this. He kept using his spirituality to wrap Azik's copper whistle so as to shield against its negative effects; otherwise, he would've encountered their abnormally passionate "response."

He had no intention of bringing this ancient and exquisite copper whistle with him originally, but considering that he had to guard against the evil spirit's manipulations, he could only sacrifice some of his spirituality.

Miss Bodyguard, no—Miss Sharron said that she's a demolition expert, and from the looks of it, she really isn't bragging…

Was she in this line of work in the past? Or does one of her Sequences in her Beyonder pathway make her skilled in this domain? According to the information I read back in the Nighthawks, a few candidates like Sequence 9 Criminal, Prisoner, Warrior, and Hunter, Sequence 8 Sheriff, and Sequence 7 Weapon Master and Knowledge Keeper. Heh, the latter has a nickname, Detective. It's part of the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom… As for the rest, I'm completely clueless.

I wonder which pathway Miss Sharron is. Nothing seems to match, and she even showed her ability to command the zombies…

While Klein's thoughts wandered and made all sorts of associations, Sharron finished setting up the explosives and, in passing, lit the fuse.

In passing? Lighting the fuse? Hey, hey, hey! Why didn't you give any warning? Only then did Klein jolt back to his senses and was startled. He quickly rushed out of the hall and entered the corridor outside.

As for the three zombies, they calmly followed behind him.

"It's very safe here." Sharron suddenly appeared and floated beside him.

Klein breathed a sigh of relief and asked, "Will dust fall from the tremors over here?"

"Yes," Sharron answered with a single word.

"That's good." As he spoke, Klein took another step back.

The hissing sound of the fuse burning reached his ears, making him feel slightly irritated.

It wasn't because he was afraid of the explosion that followed, but because he couldn't feel at ease.

"One," Sharron said suddenly.

"Huh?" Klein didn't understand what she meant.

Rumble!

The earth shook violently, and plumes of dust fell from above. Klein's ears buzzed, and for a moment he couldn't hear anything else.

If it wasn't for the fact that he was a Clown, he would've lost his balance and collapsed to the ground.

Cough! Cough! Cough! Having been distracted and caught unaware, he started to cough. He saw boulders and mud rapidly falling in front of him as they instantly blocked the entrance.

During the remaining tremors, Klein gripped the copper whistle given to him by Mr. Azik and observed its reaction.

Although he had divined beforehand that his expedition would be safe, he didn't dare to believe it completely, even if it was a revelation gained from above the gray fog since it involved the statues of the six orthodox gods. Therefore, he cautiously judged whether or not the evil spirit was freed with the help of Azik's copper whistle.

The copper whistle's surface was cold but mild, and it had no abnormal changes. Completely relieved, Klein looked at the zombies beside him and confirmed one thing from their eyes: his face was very dirty right now.

That's good. It's in line with how I'm going to explain this to Old Mister Millet Carter… I didn't waste my effort in changing into a different set of clothes… He walked to the entrance and confirmed that it was completely blocked.

Without causing too much of a commotion, it's true that only those from the Apprentice path and Beyonders like Miss Sharron can enter in the future. By doing so, she has ruled out many potential competitors. No wonder it was free… Klein looked at the boulders and dirt before sighing.

Of course, I can too. I have a condition similar to a spirit body! He silently added this sentence inwardly with a smile, but his expression didn't change at all.

"Let's call it a day." With an exaggerated snap of his fingers, Klein led the three zombies back to the basement of the house. As for Sharron, she had already disappeared.

In the spacious basement, Millet Carter was nervously pacing back and forth, looking at the secret door from time to time.

As soon as he saw Detective Moriarty and his assistants exit, he let out a long breath and asked anxiously, "What happened inside?"

Klein deliberately panted and said, "That underground structure is too old, it hasn't been repaired in a long time. We were driving the snakes away, but with just a little bit of movement, it collapsed. The whole area has collapsed, but luckily we were close to the door and managed to escape in time."

"Holy Lord of Storms! That structure was that dangerous?" Millet Carter pounded his left breast.

"Yes, there are always only a few ancient buildings that can be preserved. The rest would've collapsed in the river of history," Klein answered. "I'll bring you in to confirm the situation."

"Will there be more collapses?" Millet asked cautiously.

"No, this area is quite sturdy." Klein deliberately patted the dust off his body and coughed twice. He then led his employer in and stopped at the entrance that was completely blocked. The walls near the hall had also collapsed, leaving behind only stones and dirt.

"You can use this area." He pointed to the corridor area.

Millet was silent for a few seconds before he sighed.

"Thank goodness I didn't hastily send someone in to explore but instead went to look for you, a professional. Otherwise, I would've had to bear the burden of the loss of several lives.

"Alright, this commission ends here. I'll pay you the rest of the reward."

As he spoke, Millet Carter took out his wallet, did a count, and was somewhat embarrassed to find that there were only about thirty pounds in cash.

"Fortunately, I still have other forms of money; otherwise, I'd have to go to the bank," Millet mumbled as he looked up at Klein. "Do you mind taking gold coins?"

"No, I don't mind any form of money." Klein smiled.

The gold pound of the Loen Kingdom could be in the form of gold coins unless they were of huge denominations. This was the guarantee of the denomination on paper money.

However, in the past hundred years after Emperor Roselle, the people of the Northern Continent had become more and more accustomed to paper money. There were even some Members of Parliament who wanted notes to replace copper pennies.

Gold, in the true sense of the word, already hardly ever circulated in the market. Only some of the old gentlemen would attach a fixed box on the other end of their pocket watch chains which contained some gold in case of accidents.

It was to give them peace of mind and was also a habit.

Millet nodded, and following the gold chain on his clothes, he pulled out a box that flickered with golden light from a certain pocket.

He opened the box, took out five gold coins, and handed them together with the notes he had previously counted to the detective.

Klein didn't hide his actions as he counted the money and suddenly flicked a gold coin and caught it coolly.

"Thank you for your generosity." He glanced up at the statue and smiled sincerely. Then he pressed his hand to his chest and bowed whilst facing Millet Carter.

Yes, if it were any other detective, even if they demolished the entrance and the passageway, they would definitely have nightmares upon returning. They would hear things at home, and their minds will turn weak. They would feel like they're being watched all the time and experience other problems. That's the corruption of the evil spirit's aura. It will take a very long time before the effects disappear, but we're different. Miss Sharron is like a ghost to begin with. As for me, I'll be completely fine once I go above the gray fog. As for the three zombies, they aren't even afraid of death, so what's there to be afraid of? Klein lampooned while in a good mood as he bade Millet Cullen farewell and left his house.

Arriving on the street, without even informing him, the three zombies walked in another direction.

Miss Sharron is gone… She really didn't collect any money for the zombies… Klein smiled as he raised his arm and waved at the departing backs of the three zombies.

Then, he went home and changed into his normal clothes and headed for the Quelaag Club to practice shooting.

After also settling his dinner there as a reward for the successful completion of his mission, Klein returned to Minsk Street in a public carriage.

The dark, gloomy environment was illuminated by gas lamps, and with his cane, he strolled leisurely along the street.

Suddenly, he had a premonition which wasn't too good or bad.

What's going on? When Klein looked up, he saw two police constables with a dog on a leash, apparently investigating the streets.

Investigation? An investigation with a police dog? Is this a result of the serial killings? The scene of the murder had the smell of cloves and gooseberries, so they included a police dog? Klein couldn't help but silently lampoon.

The history of dogs dated back as far as the Roselle period, but the numbers had always been small.

Considering that he had many things on him, and considering his earlier premonition, Klein decided to take a detour.

But at that moment, the two policemen saw him and signaled for him to stop.

The corner of Klein's mouth twitched as he waited in place with a smile on his face.

"Routine investigation." As they approached, one of the officers showed his identification documents.

"Alright…" Before Klein could finish his sentence, the police dog suddenly growled at him and barked endlessly.

Is it because of the smell of gunpowder on me? The smell of gunpowder from my afternoon practice? Klein instantly realized what was happening. He looked at the faces of the two officers who were now on alert. With a thought, he smiled and said, "It's this, I picked up a revolver along the way, along with an armpit holster and bullets. I was planning on handing them over to the police."

Slowly, he took out his revolver, raised his hands to his shoulders, and added with a serious smile, "Officers, I really am not bearing a gun illegally."

As one constable remained on high alert, the other constable received the revolver and said seriously, "You have to come back to the police station with us."

"Alright," Klein returned with a radiant smile. "But I have a request. Please inform my lawyer, Mr. Jurgen Cooper. I will only accept a body search with him around."

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CHAPTER 280
THE FIRST STEP

In a corner of East Borough.

A drunken Zeon faced the wall, pulled off his pants, and began watering the moss in comfort.

When he was done, someone suddenly patted his shoulder.

Zeon couldn't help but shiver a few times. He picked up his pants and half turned to see a short boy in a canvas jacket and cap.

The "boy" raised his head, revealing a mild and delicate face despite looking dirty.

"Xio?Why are you dressed like that?" Zeon blurted out in surprise.

Xio put her index finger to her lips to indicate the need for silence.

Then, she suppressed her voice and said, "I'll ask and you answer. Keep your voice down."

Astonished by her awe-inspiring presence, Zeon could only nod.

"Which of the guys, that Williams knew, have died within the past two days?" Xio asked in a low voice.

Zeon used his alcohol-paralyzed brain to carefully think for a while and said, "Gavin! Gavin was found to have drowned in the Tussock River this morning!

"He probably fell into the river last night. The poor sod doesn't know how to swim and likes to enjoy the wind by the river when he's drunk."

Xio's gaze suddenly became sharp. Without any hesitation, she asked, "Did Gavin accept Williams's request to look for the wanted criminal, Lanevus?"

"Of course, we all got this commission from Williams. Anyway, it's not like it's a big deal. All we have to do is show the portrait to everyone we know and keep an eye out for someone who looks like him. Oh, Williams, he said that if there's a clue, he'll treat me to three days of booze and meat! The poor fellow actually died in a gas explosion. That's why I refuse to have my landlord install a gas pipe! Uh… That was months ago. I can only afford a cheap motel now," Gene droned on.

"What region is Gavin in charge of? Did he mention anything to you?" Xio looked sideways, pursed her lips, and stared straight at Zeon.

"H-he usually goes to the dock area near the East Balam Dock. He even met me yesterday evening and said that he went to the Workers Alliance Tavern there to spread the news of his search for Lanevus, and he also showed the portrait of Lanevus to everyone present." Gene hiccuped.

There were many docks in Backlund, most of which were considered as the dock area and designated as "shipyards."

"And after that? Did Gavin say what he was going to do?" Xio asked again, frowning doubtfully.

"Of course, drinking! He planned to have a good drink and then find a place to sleep! Oh, the poor sod must've felt hot from drinking and wanted to take a bath in the river, but he forgot he couldn't swim, and it's almost winter!" Zeon sighed again.

This… Gavin didn't discover anything. He had gone to the Workers Alliance Tavern in East Balam Dock and distributed "leaflets" to search for Lanevus, but ended up meeting his demise. It even implicated Williams… The

murderer's reaction can no longer be described as extreme anymore. He's simply a lunatic…

If I were Lanevus, the easiest option would be to immediately move somewhere else and avoid being found. Unless—unless he's embroiled in something and cannot leave anytime soon… But I wasn't the only one looking for him. There are also many bounty hunters. He may kill Williams, but can he kill that many people? If he had the ability, he would kill off everyone who spread wanted posters in Sivellaus Yard!

Xio was completely befuddled by the entire matter, just like how she found Williams's death was impossible.

In the end, she decided to report the problem to Miss Audrey first, and then head to the Workers Alliance Tavern in East Balam in disguise. She wouldn't make any inquiries and only observe to see if there was anyone suspicious.

…

Cherwood Borough. Rice Police Station.

Once again, Klein found himself huddled on a backrest-equipped bench with thieves and drunkards.

How unlucky… To think that I would run into the police and fail to take a detour in time. It's all because of that damn serial killer! As Klein cursed that particular person, he thought about how to hide his charms and the herbal powder he couldn't explain away and dodge the body search that followed.

He had tried to put them in his black gloves, then find a chance to slip them into a hidden spot in the police station, only to retrieve them when he left.

Just then, his eyes lit up and he saw the young lawyer, Jurgen Cooper, with his hair neatly combed back. He was dressed like he was attending a

banquet. Just as Cooper came over, he was accompanied by a police constable.

"You can leave after signing your name," Jurgen said with his usual serious expression.

"Is that all?" Klein asked in surprise.

Jurgen nodded slightly.

"Yes, they know you're a well-known detective."

What kind of reason is this? Klein didn't dare to ask further. He immediately got up and followed after Jurgen who was wearing a long black tweed coat. He signed his name at a leisurely pace before leaving.

The weather was different from the last time he was led out from the police station by Jurgen. There was no rain and only thick clouds obscuring the crimson moon and stars. The streets were illuminated by gas lamps that lined both sides of the streets.

"Thank you so much! I've troubled you once again!" Klein briskly walked forward and came to Jurgen's side.

Jurgen turned his head to look at him and said to him without a smile, "There's no need to thank me. This is my job.

"Two pounds."

"…” Klein sized him up seriously and revealed a smile. "Okay."

His wallet was bulging recently, and he produced two one-pound notes at once.

Without a trace of politeness, Jurgen received the payment and said, "If you're willing to enter into a formal partnership, then every time you come

to the police station, I'll only charge you a pound. Of course, not for the cases that are serious. You have to understand that a large portion of the fees I charge will go to the office."

It's as if I would frequently be invited to the police station for some coffee in the future… Pui, they don't even give coffee. There's isn't even a cup of water! Before Klein could answer, he heard Jurgen add.

"For a private detective, getting in and out of the police station is something that happens every once in a while. It's an occupational hazard.

"Well, I know very well that every private detective has a problem with the illegal bearing of arms and the illegal trespassing in other people's homes."

"Your response this time was very good. The police couldn't find enough evidence to prove that you were bearing a gun illegally, and the explanation for the gunpowder reaction on your body was quite sufficient. The name Quelaag Club was enough to convince them; otherwise, you most likely would've had to go to the magistrate's court.

"So, you're not a suspect, but a good citizen. A good citizen who picked up a gun and handed it in, so there was no need for a body search."

Alright… But I lost a revolver and the corresponding bullets. That's several pounds, and there's also the lawyer's fee. Klein squeezed out a smile.

"I understand. Lawyer Jurgen, let's establish a formal partnership."

The corner of Jurgen's mouth twitched. With an extremely professional smile, he extended his hand and said, "I hope for a pleasant partnership.

"I sincerely hope that I don't have to see you too often at the police station."

That's not something that's up to me to decide… Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh.

…

Back at 15 Minsk Street, Klein eased himself with a hot bath.

But at that moment, he once again heard illusory prayers coming from a woman.

Miss Justice? Is there a clue regarding Lanevus? Klein suddenly jumped out of the bathtub, quickly dried his body, put on his clothes, and went above the gray fog.

Staring at the constantly expanding and shrinking crimson star, he extended his spirituality and chose to listen.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era…

"Honorable Mr. Fool, there's been a problem with the investigation of Lanevus…”

Justice, who was wearing a white gown for an unknown reason, recounted the explosion that happened on Dharavi Street in East Borough, as well as Gavin's drowning.

As a Telepathist, who had already gained some mastery, she didn't add her own guesses, lest it affect the judgment of Mr. Fool.

After listening carefully, Klein frowned, feeling that the killer's reaction was unimaginably extreme.

Unlike Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos, Lanevus, as a swindler, would immediately move if he discovered anything was amiss. That should be his professional instinct. There's no reason to follow the clues in reverse and kill those who are seeking him.

According to this standard, 80% of East Borough's bounty hunters would die. This would cause a sensation and cause the case to be taken over by the

Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, or Machinery Hivemind!

Hmm… Has the benefits Lanevus gained, from the ritual of praying to the True Creator to send his son down, left him mad? This is very consistent with the style of the True Creator… However, the problem lies with the fact that it would be difficult for a lunatic to hide himself… Apart from the potential… Klein fell into deep thought and was in no hurry to respond to Miss Justice.

He had read the newspapers and known about the explosion, so he used dream divination to recall the details.

Then he wrote a new divination statement:

"Clues to the explosion in Dharavi Street."

As he recited it silently, he leaned back in his chair and entered a dream. He saw a three-story, grayish-blue apartment.

On the third floor of the apartment, a room had lost its windows and half the wall had been destroyed. It was filled with signs of an explosion.

The scene quickly shattered. Klein woke up from his reverie as he tapped the edge of the table and thought to himself.

The clues are at the scene of the crime?

…This revelation can also mean that the murderer is still watching the crime scene and wants to finish off the person who comes to investigate the matter.

Yes… This will give him a chance to find the person who recently issued the bounty for Lanevus.

I'll visit the crime scene in disguise and see if I can find the killer. Even if he isn't Lanevus, he must surely be connected to Lanevus.

But he must've hidden himself very well. How can I find him without attracting his attention?

A thought flashed as Klein's eyes was cast onto the All-Black Eye on the long bronze table. This was a Beyonder characteristic left behind by the Nimblewright Master Rosago.

In the real world, I can't use this item to manipulate those strange threads because of the residual mental corruption from the True Creator. There will be irreversible harm after interacting with it for a certain amount of time. However, if it was used temporarily, I can use the threads to find a hidden person. That's something acceptable. It's just like how I used it to determine if Miss Bodyguard had left previously… Klein narrowed his eyes, removed his spirit pendulum, and divined if his trip would be dangerous.

The answer was positive, but the amplitude and frequency of the spinning weren't excessive.

That's acceptable… Klein was silent for a few seconds before returning to the real world.

Then, by summoning himself, he placed the All-Black Eye into an iron cigarette case and brought it back to his bedroom.

After changing his clothes, sticking his beard on, and getting ready, Klein came before the mirror and examined himself.

The faint scholarly vibe that he had was completely concealed by the beard on his face, and his brown eyes seemed to be like an ancient pool which hid and sealed something within.

Compared to when he was in Tingen City, Klein almost didn't recognize himself.

One by one, he stretched out his fingers and clenched them into a fist. Looking at the mirror, he said in a low and hoarse voice, "Captain, this is

the first step to avenging both you and me."

Before he finished his sentence, he saw himself grinning in the mirror, a brilliant smile on his face.

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CHAPTER 281
CLUE

In the suburbs west of North Borough, in a soon-to-be-abandoned three-story house.

It originally belonged to the Backlund Medical School, but the latter's main campus had now moved to a better and more suitable location, leaving behind only a small number of teaching staff and students who were left "guarding" the area after failing to graduate.

Audrey was wearing a white gown and white mask. Her smooth blonde hair was also coiled up and stuffed under a cool-colored surgical cap.

She darted her eyes to the side and looked at Fors Wall who was dressed in the same way. She always felt that Fors had a special temperament that seemed to make her more suited to such attires than herself.

Eh… It's the kind of temperament that allows her to pick up a scalpel and cut open a patient's stomach at any moment… Audrey didn't say anything. She followed half a step behind Fors as they entered the classroom in front of them.

She was startled by the information she had received from Fors because Mr. Fool had said it was a simple task.

Considering that the simplicity of said task might be from Mr. Fool's point of view, Audrey took advantage of the moment when she was alone, changing into a disguise, to recite his honorable name and silently pray, so as to report everything that had exactly happened.

However, she had yet to receive a response.

After passing through the door and entering a room, Audrey instinctively looked around and found that this wasn't an ordinary classroom. There were actually four skeletal specimens and four coffins made of glass. The coffins were filled with pale naked corpses that were soaked in preserving agents.

At the very top of the classroom, there was a transparent glass pillar that was also filled with a liquid. Floating inside was a male corpse that wore a black scholarly robe.

The corpse's clothes stuck tightly to its body, giving off an extremely heavy feeling. He didn't relax and simply floated upright in the middle.

It's as if he had died by drowning instead of being placed in there after his death… Audrey made a preliminary judgment based on her attitude as a Spectator.

In addition, she saw a number of men in white coats, white masks, and surgical caps sitting around the long tables in the room. None of them said a word, just like the bodies and bones around them.

Looking out at the crimson moon which had finally peeked out of the gloomy darkness, Audrey turned her head back to look at the scene inside the classroom. For a moment, she couldn't help but shudder as this place instilled an instinctive fear.

But at the same time, she felt excited and agitated.

This is what the life of a Beyonder should be… Audrey silently muttered to herself as she followed Fors to a corner before sitting down.

After waiting for a while, the floating black-clothed male corpse inside the upright glass pillar at the front of the classroom suddenly opened his eyes. His voice transmitted through the layers of obstructions.

"Let's begin."

…

East Borough, Dharavi Street.

In his dusty grayish-blue worker uniform and cap, he walked along the dark streets that only had a few gas lamps that were still working.

There was candlelight shining down from the various apartments on both sides of the street. This was combined with the crimson moonlight that passed through the clouds with great difficulty, and they barely outlined the silhouettes of the pedestrians.

Klein encountered people with old, tattered clothes, their faces numb with despair. They were the homeless who had been chased away by the police.

They had no place to sleep, so they wandered aimlessly through the streets. Occasionally, they would find some inconspicuous corner or park bench to rest at for a while, but they were soon chased away again.

In the cold and dark night, Klein felt that they were more like zombies than the zombies he had seen, and the entire East Borough was more like an abyss than the legendary abyss.

He hurriedly took a quick breath which hurt his throat, causing him to cough involuntarily. He quickly gathered his thoughts and looked through the corner of his eyes at the apartment on the corner of the street. It had obviously suffered from an explosion and hadn't been repaired yet.

The best place to monitor the crime scene is the apartment across the street. The third and fourth story and the roof all meet these requirements… Klein analyzed the situation with the knowledge he had learned as a Nighthawk.

Throughout the whole process, he didn't slow down his pace to avoid arousing suspicion.

At the end of the street, Klein smoothly crossed the apartment building numbered 1 and entered the building across the street from the crime scene.

The one-bedroom apartment he had rented in East Borough was similar to this apartment, and he had also lived in an apartment of slightly higher class with his brother Benson and sister Melissa in Tingen City for quite a long time. It was Klein's personal experience, but it also came from the memory fragments of the original Klein.

As his thoughts raced, Klein lowered his cap, lowered his head, and without rushing, he walked up the creaking stairs to the third floor.

Due to his unlucky encounter in the evening, he no longer had a revolver, so all he could do was stick one hand into his pocket and hold a few tarot cards in between his fingers.

There was no light other than the faint moonlight in the corridor of the third floor. Klein was in no hurry to move forward, so he carefully observed the layout.

The spot directly across the crime scene is on the left. The one with the best view for surveillance should be the third room from here… Klein began to walk slowly and carefully.

After walking past two rooms, he also inserted his right hand into his pocket and gently opened the iron cigarette case.

After a split-second, his fingers touched the All-Black Eye, and the murmurs resounded in his ears as they attempted to tear his mind apart.

At the same time, with the help of this corrupted item, Klein saw many strange black lines.

These thin lines floated in the air, and although they were intertwined and entangled a little, he could still distinguish who they belonged to if he traced them back to the source.

The corresponding figures were reflected in Klein's soon-to-be-cooked brain. There were men, women, and children sleeping in the bunk beds, and several tenants lying in bed on the floor.

Other than that, there were no other special spots, nor were there any hidden figures.

The illusion in front of him and the auditory hallucination in his ears slowly improved as Klein quickly retracted his hand from the All-Black Eye.

He endured the pain as he continued to move forward. Once he felt some relief, he would immediately observe the other room.

Unfortunately, his efforts of "searching" the entire apartment to see if there were any places that allowed the observation of the crime scene was in vain.

Phew. Phew… Klein cowered in a corner of a balcony, his hands were on his knees as he panted heavily.

Tears streamed from the corners of his eyes, and from time to time, his nose would run as if he had fallen sick.

This was the result of his repeated contact with the All-Black Eye within a short period of time. Even with Klein's resistance in this area, he wasn't completely immune to it.

The only thing that satisfied him was that it only agitated him and didn't corrupt him. Otherwise, he would've given up long ago and wouldn't have dared to try again. That would've led directly to devolving into madness.

After resting for a while, Klein finally calmed down and switched to a different apartment that didn't have the same view as this one, but it was still for naught.

Did I interpret it wrong? The clues are at the scene of the crime? When Klein returned to the street, he looked suspiciously out of the corner of his eye at the apartment with traces of an explosion.

With the mindset of just giving it a try, he put his hand back into his pocket, pushed the metal cigarette case open, and stuck his hand inside.

He wanted to see if anyone was hiding in the apartment where the crime scene was located.

With a hum, Klein's head suddenly felt like it was being smashed as his body wobbled a little.

Like a drunkard, he staggered forward and looked at the apartment which had signs of an explosion.

As he was too far away, he couldn't "clearly see" the black lines, nor could he trace the source of the black lines. He could only barely distinguish where the black lines had gathered, and this indicated that there was someone present.

No, no, no… Klein quickly swept the area and made a rough judgment.

Suddenly, he noticed a black line floating out from the crime scene on the third floor which merged into the air!

This… Klein's pupils shrank, and he made a confirmation before quickly withdrawing his hands so as to stop being in contact with the All-Black Eye.

There's someone in the destroyed room!

That murderer is actually crazy enough to wait for investigators to come to the crime scene?

Isn't he afraid that official Beyonders will take over the case?

I made a wrong judgment and failed to find him because I shared a different sense of logic from that of a lunatic…

Many thoughts flashed through Klein's mind as he slowly exhaled and pretended that nothing had happened whilst he walked in a circle until he reached the entrance of the apartment building.

By then, all the negative effects he had suffered from the All-Black Eye had been quelled.

Controlling his facial expression and body language, Klein headed up to the third floor as if he were going home, his footsteps quick and heavy with fatigue.

In the darkness of the corridor, he caught sight of the doorless room which had half its walls collapsed. Then, he "casually" headed for the public bathroom.

As he neared the room, his hand, which had been in his pocket, touched the All-Black Eye.

Again, the mind-wrecking murmurs and the blurred hallucinations assaulted him. Through the corners of his eyes, Klein saw a black, illusory thread spread out from the crime scene.

As he traced the source, he found a man who had completely merged into the shadows. His aura was the same color.

The man was extremely tall, almost two meters in height. The corners of his mouth drooped slightly, making him appear rather eccentric.

His cold eyes were like those of a wild beast's, possessing a ferocity that couldn't be hidden.

It's not Lanevus… Klein withdrew his fingers, relaxed his body, and avoided the likelihood of staring. He entered the public bathroom at the end

of the corridor without stopping. Nor did he alarm the man.

The public bathroom and the crime scene weren't on the same side. He wiped off his cold sweat, and after quelling the negative effects, he directly jumped out the window, climbing down skillfully before leaving with brisk steps. He didn't stay a moment longer.

He knew that in a few minutes the man would be alerted to the absence of someone who had gone to the bathroom, so he had to get as far away from the street as possible.

It wasn't that Klein didn't want to walk back the way he came from, but if he didn't know which room he could go to, it would similarly expose him.

The Clown quickly ran and circled around a huge area before entering that one-bedroom apartment he had rented in East Borough. He then went above the gray fog to confirm that there was no danger of him being caught.

That fellow must have had some sort of deep connection with Lanevus… After a moment's thought, Klein conjured a portrait of the man from earlier, sending his thoughts to the crimson star that represented Miss Justice.

Soon after, he said solemnly in a tone of authority, "This is a clue."

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CHAPTER 282
THIS IS EAST BOROUGH

Inside the soon-to-be abandoned medical school building, Audrey suddenly felt adrift as she took a detour to leave the gathering which had just ended. She saw the familiar thick gray fog and the blurry figure situated in the center high above.

"This is a clue."

Accompanying Mr. Fool's solemn voice were scenes that looked like a film reel, a colored one at that!

A man who wasn't particularly muscular but was nearly two meters tall in height was wearing a black priest robe and standing in the shadows. His light yellow hair was slightly curled, and his dark brown eyes were cold with malice. The corners of his mouth drooped slightly, making him look like a ferocious wolf.

A clue? A clue to the bombing on East Borough's Dharavi Street and Gavin's drowning? Is this the murderer? Audrey stared blankly for a moment before immediately coming to an understanding.

Mr. Fool already has a clue… He's really impressive—No, he's omnipotent. After sighing to herself, she turned to look at Fors.

As soon as Fors removed her mask and surgical cap and got into the carriage, she noticed Miss Audrey's slightly strange gaze. She immediately asked in puzzlement, "Is there something on my face?"

"Nope." Audrey looked away and sat down before removing her disguise.

Fors recalled the gathering and asked curiously, "Miss Audrey, why didn't you announce that you were purchasing the Spectator formula? You could've established contact with the Psychology Alchemists that way."

She remembered that the generous Miss Audrey had remained silent most of the time and only sold some spirituality-infused materials and responded to buying other varieties accordingly.

Audrey smiled faintly and said, "This is my first gathering in this circle. I think it's more important to observe and wait.

"I'm looking forward to the potion formula and even more so, the mystical items, but I told myself that there's no rush. It would be a better strategy to familiarize myself before taking action."

This is also a 'professional habit' of the Spectator pathway. Moreover, there were no Beyonder ingredients like Dark Patterned Black Panther Spinal Fluid or Spring of the Elves Marrow Crystals which Mr. World wishes to obtain… Audrey silently added.

Looking at the girl who wasn't eighteen yet, Fors suddenly felt that she was more mature than ever before.

She suddenly laughed at herself and said, "If I had been like you back then, I wouldn't have wasted such a precious opportunity."

Audrey gave a reserved smile as a response before saying, "I'll ask some special friends in the morning if they have any leads on the Dharavi Street bombing. Wait for the information at the same place with Xio."

"Alright." Fors nodded without any doubts.

…

Instead of returning to Minsk Street, Klein slept in the one-bedroom apartment in East Borough's Black Palm Street.

He was afraid that the suspected murderer in the black priest robe had accomplices who could be searching the streets for him.

Although the probability of meeting him wasn't high, and he had disguised himself ahead of time so that it was unlikely he could be recognized, his divination indicated that there was a possibility. To be cautious, Klein made do and decided to spend the night at East Borough.

At dawn, he changed into another dark blue worker's uniform, put on a light brown cap, and left the room. He went down the stairs and into the street.

At that moment, the white fog with a yellowish tint shrouded the surroundings. There were blurry figures of people passing by, and the cold morning air was soaking into their clothes.

Klein lowered his head and hurried along, just like the people around him who had gotten up early for work.

While walking, he saw a man in his forties or fifties ahead of him. He wore a thick jacket and had gray hair around his temples. He was pacing in place and fumbling for a cigarette while shivering. Finally, he took out a box of empty matches in his clothes' inner pocket.

Just as he opened the matchbox, his right hand quivered, and the crumpled cigarette fell to the ground and rolled in front of Klein.

Klein stopped, picked it up, and handed it to him.

"Thank you, thank you! I can't live without this old friend. There's only a few left," the man thanked him sincerely and accepted the cigarette.

His face was pale, and he appeared to not have shaved for quite a while. Exhaustion was expressed without reserve from the corner of his eyes as he lamented, "I haven't slept for another night, I don't know how long I can last. I hope the Lord will bless me so that I can enter the workhouse today."

He's a homeless person who has been chased away. Klein casually asked, "Why doesn't the king and ministers allow all of you to sleep in the park?"

"Who knows? But to sleep in this kind of weather outside, it's very likely that you'll never wake up again. It's still better in the day, since you can find a warmer place. Sigh, but this will make us lack the time or strength to look for jobs." The man lit a cigarette and sucked at it delightfully.

As though he had some of his strength restored, and he walked beside Klein. It was uncertain if his destination was at the end of the fog or somewhere deep into the fog.

Klein had no intention of exchanging pleasantries and was about to speed away from him when he saw the man, who had spoken clearly, bend down and pick up a dark object from the ground.

It looked like an apple core that had been nibbled clean.

The man swallowed his saliva before stuffing the dirt-covered fruit core into his mouth. He chewed it until it was mashed up before swallowing it down with great familiarity. Nothing was left.

Looking at Klein's surprised eyes, he wiped his mouth, shrugged his shoulders, and smiled bitterly.

"I haven't eaten in almost three days."

This sentence struck Klein's heart, causing him to feel indescribably moved.

He silently sighed and said with a smile, "Sorry, I didn't introduce myself just now. I'm a reporter, and I'm currently writing about homeless people. Can I interview you? Let's go to the café up front."

The man froze for a moment before he smiled and said, "No problem, it's much warmer inside than on the streets.

"If you can stay a little bit longer after the interview and let me sleep inside for half an hour… No, fifteen minutes! That would be even better."

Klein turned agape, momentarily at a loss for words. He just silently led his "interviewee" into the budget café at the end of the street.

The tables and chairs in the coffee shop were quite greasy. Due to the walls and windows inside, there were quite a few guests. The average temperature was indeed much higher than the streets.

The man scratched his throat, concealing his Adam's apple that was squirming from the fragrance.

Klein motioned for him to sit down and went to order two large cups of tea, a plate of lamb stewed with young peas, two loaves of bread, two pieces of toast, a serving of low-quality butter, and a serving of artificial cream for a total of 17.5 pence.

"Have some food to eat. We'll have the interview after you eat your fill." Once the food was ready, Klein carried them back to their table.

"This is for me?" the man asked with anticipation and surprise.

"Except for a piece of toast and a cup of tea, the rest is yours." Klein smiled in response.

The man wiped his eyes and said with a slightly choked voice, “…Y-you truly are a kind-hearted person."

"After starving for so long, make sure not to eat too quickly," Klein warned.

"I know, I had an old buddy who died just like that." The middle-aged man worked hard at eating at a slower pace, occasionally lifting his cup of tea and gulping it down.

Klein easily finished the toast and watched quietly, waiting for the man to finish his meal.

"Phew, I haven't eaten until I was this full in three months, no—half a year. In the workhouse, the food they give is just enough." After a while, the man put down his spoon, leaving empty plates in front of him.

Pretending to be a journalist, Klein asked casually, "How did you become a vagabond?"

"It was bad luck, I was originally a worker leading quite a good life. I had a wife, two cute children, a boy and a girl, but a few years ago, an infectious disease took them away, and I also stayed in the hospital for a long period of time, losing my job, my wealth, and my family in the process. From then on, I often couldn't find a job, and I didn't have any money to rent a house or buy food. All I could do was wander on the different streets and in certain parks. This made me very weak, making it harder for me to find a job…" the man spoke with a hint of nostalgia and sadness in his numbness.

He took a sip of his tea, sighed, and spoke again.

"I can only wait for an opportunity to enter the workhouse, but as you know, every workhouse only takes in a limited number of people. With good luck, and if I queue up in time, I can spend a few days in peace, recover my strength a little, and then find a temporary job. Yea, temporary. Soon, I'll be jobless again and the previous process will be repeated. I have no idea how much longer I can last like that.

"I should've been a good worker."

Klein thought for a moment and asked, "How many cigarettes do you have left?"

"Not many left." The middle-aged man smiled bitterly. "This is the last of my assets, the only thing I have left after I was chased out by the landlord. Heh, one can't bring them into the workhouses, but I'll secretly hide them in

the seams of my clothes. I'll only take one out to smoke during my worst hardships so that I can have some hope. I don't know how long I can last, but let me tell you, I was a good worker back then."

Klein wasn't a professional journalist and was momentarily at a loss on what to ask.

He turned his head to look out the window and saw faces with obvious hunger plastered across them.

Some of them were relatively sober and they belonged to the residents of East Borough. Some of them wore looks of numbness and exhaustion, nothing like that of humans. They were vagabonds.

There is no obvious gap between the two, the former can easily become the latter. For example, the gentleman in front of me… When Klein looked back, he discovered that the man had fallen asleep; his body curled up on a chair.

After a few minutes of silence, Klein went to pat the man awake and gave him a handful of copper pennies.

"This is the payment for the interview."

"Okay, okay, thank you, thank you!" The man didn't realize what was happening, and when Klein reached the door, he raised his voice and said, "I'll go to a budget motel and get a bath, get a good night's sleep, and then get a job."

…

At noon, Klein attended a party at the Sammers. There were ten guests.

There was apple juice with steak, roast chicken, fried fish, sausage, cream soup, lots of delicacies, two bottles of champagne, and a bottle of red wine.

On his way back from the bathroom, he met Mrs. Stelyn Sammer. He thanked her sincerely, "It was a sumptuous lunch. Truly delightful. Thank you for your hospitality."

"It cost a total of 4 pounds and 8 soli. The most expensive were the three bottles of wine, but they were all part of Luke's collection. He has a liquor cabinet." The pretty Mrs. Stelyn smiled in response.

Without waiting for Klein to speak, she said, "You earned ten pounds from Mary's matter alone, and if you can keep up the good fortune, you'll soon be able to have a banquet like this. For people of our class, you have to invite friends once a month and also be invited by friends."

Klein, who was already used to her mannerisms, obliged politely, "Well, I'll have to wait till my income settles at four hundred pounds a year before I can be like you."

Stelyn immediately raised her chin slightly and tried hard to make her smile faint.

"430 pounds, it must be 430 pounds."

…

Dock area, East Balam Dock, Workers Alliance Tavern.

Xio wore boots that gave her height a huge boost and stuck on a thick beard, making herself look like a short man.

She tried to recall the portrait from Miss Audrey, trying to engrave in her mind the image of the man who might have been the murderer.

If Gavin had been killed by him, the murderer probably frequents this tavern… Xio ordered a glass of rye beer and a lunch set before huddling in a corner and eating slowly. From time to time, she would look around furtively in search of her target.

After a while, the tavern's door was pushed open again, and Xio reflexively looked over.

With just one look, her pupils shrank so thin that they resembled needles as she nearly became petrified.

The patron who entered was nearly two meters tall!

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CHAPTER 283
DOCK UNION

Xio has been in the bounty hunter business for a very long time. Many things were done on instinct without any thought.

When she saw the patron who entered was nearly two meters tall, she instinctively lowered her head and continued to eat her pork sausage and french fries as if nothing had happened.

Although the food entered her mouth, Xio didn't taste it at all. She endured dozens of painful seconds before she slowly raised her head and pretended to look around casually.

Soon, she saw that the patron who had just entered was sitting in front of the bar counter, waiting for his booze and lunch.

Soft, curly pale yellow hair, dark brown beast-like eyes, a slightly drooping mouth, an aura of solitude and malevolence… Little by little, the details came into Xio's eyes, overlapping with the image in her head.

It's him!

It's the suspected murderer!

The man who killed Williams!

Xio lowered her head again and slowly stuffed the rest of the food into her mouth.

After a few minutes, she set the tray down on the bar, along with the glass, and left the Workers Alliance Tavern without looking back.

Due to her high boots, they effectively masked the most obvious features of her boots.

Outside, Xio slowed her pace and found a secluded spot to observe the people entering and exiting the tavern.

After waiting for a while, she finally found an acquaintance, a technician named Burton, who lived in East Borough and worked at the East Balam Dock.

The young man liked to treat himself to a cup of shoddy rye beer at noon or in the afternoon, and his salary only allowed him to afford such a beer, and he couldn't drink it every day.

Xio nimbly darted over and patted Burton on the shoulder. She lowered her voice and said, "It's me, Xio."

"Xio?" Burton looked up and down at the short man and nearly failed to recognize him as the famous Arbiter Xio Derecha of the streets of East Borough.

"I have something to ask you." Xio pointed to a nearby corner.

Burton followed in puzzlement, only to come to a realization when he arrived in a secluded corner.

"Are you doing a bounty mission?"

He had heard that Xio was also a bounty hunter.

"Yes." Xio nodded perfunctorily, fished out five pennies, and tossed them around. "Do you know that tall man at the tavern?"

"You mean the one that's this tall, has pale yellow hair, and wears a fierce look?" Burton gestured.

"Yes." Xio took out the folded portrait and unfolded it. "You have to be sure."

"That's him. He's been coming to this tavern often for the past two to three months. I've never seen him before that. He's very fierce, completely unreasonable, and he's good at fighting. It's best that you don't provoke him." Burton glanced at the portrait carefully and gave some sincere advice.

Yeah, when I saw that person just now, it was just like my encounter with a ferocious beast when I was young. I felt that I was in danger and wasn't a match for him, so I had to immediately avoid him… Xio secretly exhaled and asked, "Do you know anyone he's in close contact with?"

"No idea. He's not very sociable and he seldom speaks. We don't even know what his name is. We have given him a nickname, 'Giant.'" Burton curled his lips and shook his head.

Xio thought for a while before asking again, "Where else have you met him, besides the tavern?

"You can ask your friends the same question. Remember, it has to be a trusted friend."

Burton recalled and said, "When I went to the Dock Union to do some work, uh—the East Balam Dock's Dock Union, I would occasionally see him appear there. Xio, why aren't you a member of the union? You're so just, and those guys not only charge us 1.5 soli a week. But when the other docks go on strike, they'll pay us half our salary just because we have to support our families!

"Lord, let's just forget about it. In order to live a good life, we must help each other. However, once they organize a strike, they'll come to an

agreement with the lawyers sent by those rich people. Our situation doesn't improve at all!"

"Stop, stop." Xio lowered her right palm and said, "Apart from that, have you seen 'Giant' anywhere else?"

"No, my friends probably haven't either. After all, we often discuss him in private," Burton answered in a firm tone.

Xio didn't say anything more and gave him five copper pennies.

"Drinks on me."

"Don't tell anyone about what I just asked. It'll be very dangerous."

Before she finished her sentence, she had already turned around the corner and headed towards the Dock Union located at East Balam Dock.

About ten minutes later, Xio saw the two-story yellow building.

She wore her canvas coat inverted and exposed the patches beneath, instantly transforming herself from a short worker to a vagabond.

Xio looked at the homeless people huddled around the corner, pinched her nose, and went over to sit down beside them. She glanced at the Dock Union on the opposite side of the street where people were coming in and out.

As the minutes passed, Xio endured the cold and the harsh environment while tenaciously observing the situation around the Dock Union and the surrounding area.

She clearly remembered Williams's insistence on drinking, and she also remembered how she felt when she saw the newspaper that fateful day.

These feelings made her even more patient than usual.

At that moment, about eight people came out of the Dock Union, and they headed for the café across the street to have lunch in groups.

Xio narrowed her eyes and carefully scanned every passer-by to confirm their appearance.

There's no one suspicious… Xio was about to look away and wait for the next batch of people when the door to the coffee shop creaked and was pulled open as the heat from within rushed out. A man couldn't help but take off his gold-rimmed glasses and wipe away the fog with his sleeves.

Xio gave him a casual glance, and her gaze suddenly froze.

Those eyes!

That mouth!

It always had that taunting smile!

Lanevus? Xio jerked her head back, not daring to look again.

The man from before had bronze skin and short hair, and his face was craggy. He was very different from the portraits, except that his eyes and mouth gave her a familiar feeling.

It was the feeling of taunting everyone!

Is it Lanevus? Can it be Lanevus? Xio bowed her head and stared at the flagstones on the street.

…

At the Sammers.

After a sumptuous lunch, the hosts and guests gathered in the activity room to chat, and they agreed to play Texas together.

Interesting rumors and humorous stories echoed intermittently as Klein maintained his smile, interjecting from time to time. He also saw the Sammer family's two children entering and exiting energetically.

And next to him, Jurgen Cooper wore his usual serious expression, occasionally providing legal advice for the discussion.

Klein smiled, turned his body slightly, and asked in a low voice, "Are you bored?"

"No, their topics are very interesting." Jurgen nodded seriously.

Klein was stunned and blurted a question, "Then why don't you laugh?"

Jurgen frowned slightly and looked at him in puzzlement.

"Why are you smiling?"

"…” Klein's mouth twitched, not knowing how to respond.

He was about to make a joke about how much Jurgen was like his cat Brody, forever so serious, when suddenly he heard a series of ethereal pleas.

Female… Miss Justice has found useful information, so quickly, based on the clue I gave her? Klein stood up and slightly bowed.

"I need to use the bathroom."

In the bathroom, Klein locked the door, took four steps counterclockwise, and went above the gray fog.

His judgment was very accurate, as the plea came from Miss Justice.

Klein suddenly felt nervous as he emanated his spirituality in anticipation and seriousness to listen to her words.

After the usual honorable name, Justice recounted truthfully, "They discovered the clue you provided at the Workers Alliance Tavern in the pier district's East Balam Dock. The person's nickname is 'Giant.'

"After tailing the Giant and figuring his in and outs, they discovered a person suspected to be Lanevus at the East Balam Dock's Dock Union.

"Temporarily, they don't dare to approach Lanevus because 'Giant' is very powerful and dangerous. They can only continue waiting for an opportunity.

"In the meantime, they've also asked if they could notify the police and collect the bounty after confirming that it's Lanevus."

Lanevus has a very powerful and dangerous helper. Does he have any other helpers? Is there a faction backing him? Why did he kill so many people? What was he planning to do by being in the Dock Union? A series of questions flashed through Klein's mind, making him feel that things were much more complicated than he had expected.

As for the last request, his answer was undoubtedly—yes. He would even suggest to the other party that they should inform the church of the Evernight Goddess directly because there was a possibility of the police leaking the information.

Getting the Nighthawks of the Church of the Goddess to kill Lanevus is also a form of revenge! Klein silently murmured to himself. He had a strong urge to immediately confirm that the man was Lanevus, lest things changed because he waited too long.

He took a deep breath, suppressed his emotions, and undid the spirit pendulum around his wrist on his sleeve.

"There is danger going to the Dock Union for confirmation."

Closing his eyes and chanting seven times, Klein opened his eyes and looked at the topaz pendant. He discovered that it was motionless,

completely still.

The divination failed? Klein immediately frowned.

He changed the sentence he used, changed the divination method, but they all resulted in a failure.

After some careful thought, he thought of three reasons. First, there wasn't enough information to make a divination. Second, Lanevus wasn't at the Dock Union, making it difficult for the divination to succeed. And, third, Lanevus was just like Ince Zangwill who had items that could shield against divination.

An item to shield against divination… A benefit he obtained from that god's spawn ritual? A little godhood of the True Creator? Klein thought for a few seconds, then decided that no matter what, he had to make a trip to the Dock Union.

There were certain things that needed to be done even though danger was a certainty!

If the two ladies were able to observe secretly without being seen, so can I… I only need to meet with Lanevus once and I can confirm it with divination…

Of course, I can't be rash. I have to prepare in advance. For example, I have to send the All-Black Eye above the gray fog and not carry it with me. That's to prevent the spiritual corruption of the True Creator from resonating with "His" godhood. Another example, I should elevate my height so that the "Giant" wouldn't be able to recognize me as the "passer-by" from last night from my figure. For example, I should find a suitable and sufficient reason to not arouse suspicion. Yes, I can pretend to be a reporter and head there for an interview. I'll visit Mike Joseph later and borrow his false reporter identification…

The corner of Klein's mouth slowly curled up as he blanketed his body with his spirituality before descending back into the real world.

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CHAPTER 284
INSTINCTIVE TREMBLING

Three in the afternoon at the Dock Union in East Balam Dock.

Klein wore a thick sweater, a tan jacket, and a simple cap that brought him closer to the usual investigative reporters in style rather than the ones who attended banquets and interviewed people of status from time to time. Such a costume had cost him an extra 1 pound 10 soli.

At that moment, he was wearing gold-rimmed glasses, and his hair was neatly combed back, gleaming with the luster of hair oil. His face no longer had a messy beard, so he could only plaster a deep-black stubble around his lips. His height was at least five centimeters taller than before. He was trying his best to look different from the worker from last night, making it impossible for anyone who wasn't particularly familiar with him to make any associations.

In the pockets of his clothes and trousers, there was no All-Black Eye, no charms or herbal essential oils. There was only a deck of tarot cards, a stack of notes, a fountain pen, a wallet, some change, a bunch of keys, and false reporter identification documents.

He didn't know the Lanevus's current condition, nor did he know where the powerful Beyonder lingering around him came from. Hence, out of precaution, he didn't bring any suspicious items.

Looking at the two-story building ahead of him, Klein crossed the street, pretending to not rely on the Clown's intuition to notice that several pairs of eyes were watching him.

He pushed open the door and saw that the Dock Union's layout was rather simple. There were no female receptionist or spacious lobbies. The stairs to the second floor were in the middle, flanked by office corridors, and the floors weren't lined with wooden planks, much less carpet. They were paved purely out of cement.

Klein turned his head to look at the man guarding by the door as he went over and said, "I'm a reporter from the Backlund Daily Tribune. I would like to interview the workers of your association and get to know your needs and desires."

The man was wearing a very patched jacket which even had dirty cotton lining exposed and a linen shirt underneath.

After hearing the word "reporter," he suddenly became vigilant and replied loudly, "No! We haven't organized a strike lately, no!"

"I think you've misunderstood me. I'm someone who sympathizes with you. I'm planning on doing a special report on what the union does to help the workers and the actual difficulties they encountered. Trust me." With the help of his Clown Beyonder powers, Klein made his eyes look abnormally sincere.

"Is that so… Go to Mr. Rand, our committee member in charge of publicity. Turn right, and it's the second office on the right," The man hesitated for a few seconds before replying.

"Thank you." Klein bowed with feigned relief, and he felt the gaze observing him from a dark corner of the room vanish.

He turned to his right and, with his back perspiring in cold sweat, knocked on the office door.

The door creaked open. A middle-aged man with sparse hair looked at him and asked, "May I know who you are?"

"Mr. Rand? I'm Reporter Statham from the Backlund Daily Tribune. This is my reporter identification documents. I'd like to make a report with unions as the theme to help you acquire more attention." Klein almost believed he was a journalist.

"That's me." The middle-aged man looked at the reporter's identification documents and said hesitatingly, clearly unwillingly, "It's hard for me to believe that you reporters are here to help us."

"I was born in East Borough, and I know how miserable the lives of the workers are. If you don't believe me, you can follow me the entire time and monitor my every question." Klein suddenly smiled and added, "A report with actual interview data would be better than nothing, far better than news that's written purely based on imagination. At least you can provide your views and hopefully guide things in the direction you want."

Rand touched his scalp and replied hesitantly, "Alright then…

"I'll follow you the entire time."

"Thank you!" Klein almost lost control of his emotions.

Afterward, under Rand's guidance, he entered one office after another, interviewing the members of the workers' association according to his prepared questions.

Right corridor, nothing. Left corridor, nothing… Klein calmly went up the wooden stairs to the second floor.

This time, Rand led him into the office directly opposite the staircase and introduced the people inside, "This is a reporter from the Backlund Daily Tribune, Mr. Statham.

"He wants to interview the lot of you, but I have to remind you that there are some questions which you have the right to refuse to answer."

Klein smiled, took two steps forward, and made a gesture to shake hands with each and every staff member in the room.

At that moment, he saw a slightly familiar figure.

Although the man's skin had turned bronze, his ordinary round face had become angular, and his glasses had changed from a round frame to a gold-rimmed frame, Klein still found a trace of familiarity from his spirituality as a Seer.

Immediately afterward, his body trembled, and the smile on his face almost went out of control.

"I-I'm sorry. I suddenly have a stomachache. May I ask, where the washroom is?" Klein asked with an awkward smile, holding his stomach with the hand that didn't hold a pen and paper.

Rand and the staff didn't suspect anything. They all pointed to the door and said, "Go out, turn left. When you reach the end, you'll see the sign."

Klein smiled apologetically and walked out of the room, heading quickly for the washroom.

Inside, he selected the cubicle closest to the window, sat on the toilet, and locked the wooden door behind him.

He bent down, the corners of his mouth curving into a silent laugh. He laughed so hard he nearly couldn't keep his body straight. A drop of sparkling liquid fell onto the ground from his laughter.

Klein had confirmed that it was Lanevus!

This wasn't because of that small sense of familiarity, but because he felt another type of aura from the other party's body, one that left an extremely deep impression on him!

This was also the main reason why he had nearly lost control on the spot.

The trembling of his body originated from his instinctive fear!

The collapse of his emotions came from the horror and sorrow deep within his memories!

That was, that was… That was the aura of the True Creator!

…

Klein washed his face and went on with the interview as if nothing had happened. Even while facing Lanevus, who had somehow changed so much, he continued to ask questions and record the answers.

After finishing all of this, he bade farewell to the workers' association and walked out of the dimly lit building.

Outside, the sky was cloudy and misty, as if the evening had come early.

The True Creator's aura can only come from "His" body or spawn, as well as things that extend from the two. For example, items bestowed by "Him," or "His" godhood… This corroborates with what Lanevus said to Hood Eugen. In addition, there's that tinge of familiarity. I didn't even need to go above the gray fog for divination to confirm that it's him… If it wasn't for me having already interacted with the True Creator a few times and coming close to his mental corruption, there's no way I could've recognized that aura to be "His" which didn't contain any strength and of "His" nature… Klein felt heavy emotions, but he appeared very relaxed.

He stood on the street and purposely organized the interview notes.

In the process, he caught a glimpse of a slightly familiar figure among the vagabonds across him.

Miss Xio? Klein instantly made a guess with what he knew.

He didn't stop, and he put away the notes before walking towards the tracked public carriage station.

At this moment, a horse carriage suddenly stopped in front of him.

"We meet again." Sitting in the carriage was a thin, elegant, middle-aged gentleman with white hair at his temples. He was the great detective who was helping the police investigation, Isengard Stanton.

As for Klein, he didn't look any different than usual. He was just a little taller and had changed into a new set of clothes.

"What a coincidence, I was just thinking about the last time I interviewed you," Klein answered deliberately.

Isengard suddenly understood and changed the subject with a smile.

"I'm here to investigate a case. The death of Siber has been eliminated and I'm in charge of it. Her death is very close to East Balam Dock."

"So it's indeed a copycat crime?" Klein feigned ignorance.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, he got into the tracked public carriage. Instead of going straight home, he made a transfer and headed to the Quelaag Club in Hillston.

In the Club's lounge, he quickly went above the gray fog to confirm that no one was following him.

Only at this step did Klein completely relax and feel some lingering fear.

The aura of the True Creator lingered in his mind like a nightmare, leaving the clothes on his back moist after they repeatedly dried.

To be sure, Klein conjured a yellowish-brown goatskin parchment and a dark red fountain pen before writing a divination statement he had already

long thought of:

"The source of the inexplicable familiarity earlier."

Putting down his fountain pen and leaning back into his chair, he began to mumble as he entered the dream.

In that gray and illusory world, he saw a figure.

This figure had ordinary facial features. He wore round glasses, and he had a condescending and taunting smile from beginning to end. He was none other than Lanevus!

I've finally found you! Klein no longer used his Clown ability to control his facial expressions as he muttered to himself through clenched teeth.

Then, he sat up straight and prepared to answer Miss Justice's prayer.

Klein controlled his emotions and said in a deep but cold voice, "There's no need for confirmation.

"That is Lanevus.

"You can inform the Church of the Evernight Goddess and tell them that Lanevus has the godhood of the Fallen Creator."

…

Audrey, who was watching her father train the hunting hounds with Susie, froze when she heard Mr. Fool's response.

Fallen Creator… Isn't that the True Creator? That swindler actually has the godhood of the True Creator? Th-this, such a simple mission actually involves the godhood of the True Creator!? As expected, I knew Mr. Fool had other deeper motives… He was targeting the True Creator. As expected of Mr. Fool! Many thoughts flashed through Audrey's mind.

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CHAPTER 285
MIDNIGHT BELL TOWER

Audrey, who had set up an urgent communication method with Xio and Fors, quickly passed on Mr. Fool's message to the two ladies through the huge golden retriever, Susie, claiming that the information she had received came via other sources.

In the corner of an old church, as Xio was thinking about how to confirm Lanevus's identity, or how she should create chaos and avenge Williams, she unfolded the ball of paper.

…There's no need to confirm. He's Lanevus? Xio's eyes widened as she quickly skimmed through the rest of the paper's content. The piece of paper clearly wrote:

"The only choice is to notify the Church of the Evernight Goddess.

"Alert them that Lanevus has the godhood of the True Creator on him."

"Godhood? The True Creator's godhood?" Xio blurted out as she looked at the golden retriever in front of her in shock, only to realize that she was equally dumbfounded.

"What?" Fors was listening when she suddenly felt something was amiss. She hurriedly reached out for the piece of paper and scanned it.

After a moment, she curled her lips and said at a loss, "This… this must be a joke, right?

"How did we get involved in a matter that's tied to an evil god's godhood?"

This was meant to involve the capture of a cunning swindler worth only 200 pounds!

In response to Fors's question, Susie could only express the notion that she was only a dog and that she didn't know what was happening either with her innocent eyes.

Not expecting a dog to answer her questions, she turned her head to Xio and said, "I'm afraid Miss Audrey isn't as naive and innocent as we thought. She has many secrets.

"This might be a power struggle between a cult, the nobles and the Church.

"However, it's evident that she didn't know about the matter of godhood prior to this. She's also being used by someone. Hmm… That person could be her father, Count Hall."

"What's fortunate is that this matter ends here. You don't need to take the risk anymore. After you get someone to make the report, you just need to wait to collect the bounty in peace."

Xio was startled and said, "That's true…

"Hopefully, those Nighthawks are able to avenge Williams. They're so strong, so they'll definitely be able to do it. Definitely…”

Before she finished speaking, she suddenly turned her head to the side and spoke as if she was talking to herself, "I'm still too weak.

"Too weak…”

Xio jerked her hand up, covering her mouth and nose.

…

I'm still too weak… If not for that, I would've chosen to take revenge myself, but right now I can only take a step back… Not to mention there's 'Giant' and those hidden helpers around Lanevus. With just his godhood, he isn't someone I can deal with… With the reaction speed of the Nighthawks, they'll likely take action tonight once they receive the report. The Backlund diocese is second only to the Church's headquarters. They have many Sealed Artifacts and many powerful Beyonders. There's no need to wait for any additional helpers… After completing his task of informing Audrey, Klein returned to the real world. He stuck on a beard, changed his hairstyle, and stared into the mirror for several minutes.

He felt anticipation and excitement, as well as depression and a sense of powerlessness.

Before the evening arrived, he left the Quelaag Club and returned to Minsk Street. On his way, he went to the grocery market and found a stall that was bustling with its great business. He bought several masks, including a clown's.

He had decided to watch the hunt for Lanevus tonight!

He wanted to see the other party pay the price for his madness with his own eyes!

Of course, with his strength, he could only watch from a distance and not even have the right to approach them.

By eleven o'clock, when many people were in their dreams, Klein changed into his grayish-blue worker's uniform and disguised himself as he had the night before. Then, he put on his cap, walked a few streets away, and took a rental carriage to the Backlund Bridge area.

Once there, he switched to walking and walked all the way to the East Balam Dock.

His interview yesterday included questions such as "where are you staying now" and "how's the environment like." Therefore, he knew very well that Lanevus would be staying in the dormitory provided by the Dock Union at night.

However, Klein didn't go near it. Instead, he carefully went around it. His target was the clock tower of the East Balam Dock.

In Backlund, in addition to the large church with its tall, iconic clock tower, many government buildings were also equipped with one. However, they weren't necessarily tall, grand, and not ornate. It was mostly built for pragmatic reasons, such as this one in the East Balam Dock.

Compared to the surrounding buildings that reached a maximum of three stories, it was like a giant that stood high in the night sky as it overlooked the entire area.

Klein easily entered the interior of the clock tower and went up the endless flight of spiral stairs as he moved quickly in the darkness.

Finally, he arrived at his destination. He arrived at the top of the gigantic wall clock. It was surrounded by a dark yellow fence, and at the top of his head was a steeple that could be reached by stretching his hand.

Taking a few steps forward, Klein hid in the shadows, got a sense of his bearings, and looked towards the Dock Union's dormitory.

It was a two-story, brick-red building, and the occasional pedestrian resembled a black dot in Klein's eyes.

He stared for a few seconds, then took a step back, and sank into the darkness.

At the same time, he took out his newly bought mask and wore it.

It was a clown with the corner of its mouth sharply raised and a painted red nose.

A happy clown.

…

Wearing a clown mask, Klein stood in the rich darkness, patiently waiting for the predetermined show.

He waited for two hours.

When the hands of the large wall clock passed one o'clock, he suddenly saw something flying from the distance.

It was a huge airship covered in dark black paint!

If it weren't for the faint moonlight, it would've been indistinguishable from the night sky. Unlike what was described in the newspapers and magazines, depicting them as machines that emitted exaggerated mechanical noises, its oars rotated quietly, as silent as a vulture who had found its prey but hadn't found a chance.

The solid, light alloy supported the cotton frame, and below it hung the compartment for guns, projectile launchers, and cannons. At a glance, it appeared to be a powerful deterrent.

It's silent… Is this a temporary result caused by Beyonder means? Klein, wearing his clown mask, looked at the slowly descending airship and made a guess.

At this moment, he was most puzzled over the dispatch of an airship for a small-scale Beyonder battle in a densely populated area of the city!

Aren't they afraid of dealing collateral damage to the surrounding citizens? Aren't they afraid of causing panic?

Very soon, the airship hovered about 10 meters in the air. This way, Klein was even less worried about being discovered. His position was much higher than them!

Observing the situation below, he suddenly had a hunch. It was likely that the airship wouldn't engage in combat, but rather provide air surveillance of the area to give the personnel involved in the operation a better view and prevent the target from escaping if any accidents occurred.

Right at this moment, three figures dressed in black robes suddenly appeared in front of the two story brick-red building.

The man in the lead didn't wear a hat, revealing his short golden brown hair and blackish-green eyes which appeared to be as deep as a windless lake.

The collars of his shirt and windbreaker were propped up high, and his palms were covered with a layer of gloves that were as red as blood!

A silver-white metal suitcase was wound around his left hand via a chain of the same color.

This was one of the of the nine high-ranking deacons of the Church of the Evernight Goddess, Crestet Cesimir. He was also one of the three powerhouses of the Red Gloves and he happened to be in Backlund.

After looking straight ahead, Cesimir turned his head to the left and said to his subordinate, "Use Sealed Artifact 1-63."

"Yes, Your Grace." The Nighthawk crouched down and helped Cesimir untie the chain around the silver suitcase.

Throughout the entire process, Crestet Cesimir's muscles were very tense, as though he was fighting something.

The Nighthawk on the left took a deep breath and pressed down suddenly, causing the illusionary ripples on the surface of the silver box to crack.

The surrounding halo suddenly disappeared as if it was completely sucked into the case. A bone sword, that was less than a meter-long, emitted glossy, pure white light as it slowly floated up.

Its blade had an ancient silver-coated mirror attached to it.

The scenes reflected in the mirror were layered and superimposed without end.

The Nighthawk on the left took the mirror and pointed it at the brick-red building.

The building was clearly reflected in it, and nothing seemed to change.

However, Cesimir slowly exhaled, stretched out his left hand to grasp the short bone sword.

The surrounding halo was somewhat restored.

"Let's go in." He started walking towards the entrance of the brick building.

The three Nighthawks opened the door and entered the dark building and targeted the stairs that led to the second floor.

At that moment, a tall, thin figure emerged from the shadows in the corner. He wore a black priest's uniform, and he had curly, pale yellow hair and beastly dark brown eyes.

"You're the Goddess's Sword?" The nearly-two-meter-tall "Giant" spoke in a deep voice.

At the same time, he clenched his right palm.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Union members in this small brick-red building exploded one after another in their dreams, without even having the chance to scream.

Their bodies split into pieces, turning into thick, sticky flesh. Half of their bodies rushed towards the "Giant" to weave into cloaks that could reduce magical damage. The other half condensed into furry giant rugs that blanketed the three Nighthawks.

Crestet Cesimir only watched silently without doing anything.

Silently, the flesh and blood dissipated and collapsed before falling down like rain, but the raindrops didn't stain the floor red.

In each of the rooms, figures emerged once more, still sleeping soundly.

"This is the world within a mirror, a mirror world that only targets Beyonders. The flesh bombs you planted in the bodies of the ordinary people are only illusions in here." Cesimir raised the Holy Artifact bone sword in his right hand, causing the light around him to disappear.

"Hmph!" the "Giant" suddenly grabbed his left shoulder with his right hand and tore off his arm. He then threw the blood arm forward!

Boom!

His arm exploded like a bomb, turning into a rain of blood that rained down on the three Nighthawks.

At the same time, the flesh on his left shoulder began to squirm madly as he slowly grew a new arm which was still bloody without any skin.

Smack! Smack! Smack!

Sizzle!

The blood-colored raindrops accurately avoided Cesimir and the others before falling to the ground and quickly corroding into deep, dark traces.

But no matter how hard they tried, they always missed the three Nighthawks by a hair's breadth, as if they were fated to do so.

"My enemies aren't always lucky enough." The corners of Cesimir's mouth curled up, and with a slip of his foot, he instantly appeared in front of "Giant."

Giant's eyes narrowed as his body suddenly melted like a candle, turning into sticky flesh and blood that quickly seeped into the floor.

Cesimir immediately kneeled and plunged the Holy Artifact bone sword into the ground.

"No!"

In the rich darkness, a roar filled with pain and horror instantly sounded, and it was immediately swallowed up by tranquility and serenity.

Cesimir stood up and drew out the bone sword. A drop of dark red blood was slowly dripping down its tip, and on the floor, flesh and blood were seeping out, congealing into a face of despair. It was precisely the "Giant" who had a slightly drooping mouth.

Pat! Pat! Pat!

Three shadows appeared around Cesimir in succession. However, they all mysteriously collapsed to the ground, having been forcefully taken down by many invisible entities!

Bang! Bang! Bang! Another Nighthawk fired, and the silver surface of the bullet seemed to bear the Evernight Sacred Emblem.

The three attackers hiding in the shadows suddenly revealed themselves, twitching as they lost their breath.

"Rose Bishop, Shadow Ascetic… People from the Aurora Order." Cesimir frowned and said in a low voice without turning to his companions, "There's something wrong about this. It's very strange. All of you be careful."

Before he could finish his words, he heard the shuffling of footsteps which echoed in the silence and serenity.

Immediately, he saw Lanevus with his chiseled face dressed in a linen shirt walking down the dark staircase. He appeared calm and placid without any signs of fear.

"I'm very curious. To the Aurora Order, you should be a blasphemer. Why would they send people to protect you?" Cesimir didn't seem to notice the abnormality as he asked casually.

Lanevus showed his trademark taunting smile and said, "That's simple.

"Because I'm no longer just Lanevus."

He paused for a moment, and his gaze suddenly turned cold.

"Now, I'm even more of the True Creator!"

He yanked open his linen shirt, revealing the dark red flesh of his skinless chest and abdomen.

The flesh and blood were conjoined together, forming the figure of a hanged man!

All of a sudden, the void around them shattered like glass, and all the scenes around them crumbled.

This was the aura of a deity.

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CHAPTER 286
A TAUNTING SMILE

In the clock tower of East Balam Dock, Klein hid in the darkness while donning a clown mask as he quietly stared at the dormitory of the Dock Union. An airship floated above.

He couldn't see the details of the battle, and he had no way of knowing the developments of the operation in the red-brick building. All he could do was endure and determine the situation by observing the changes in the surroundings and the occasional black dot that passed by.

Just then, he saw all the gas lamps in the area extinguish.

All of them had been extinguished!

It was pitch black there!

Right on the heels of that, a feeling that left an extremely deep impression on him exploded from the small red-brick building. Even from a long distance away, Klein couldn't help but tremble all over; his legs went soft, and he bent his waist.

It was the feeling of being looked down upon, a feeling that repressed one's spirit.

It was a feeling that was impossible to resist or face!

No, don't look directly at God… In his adrift thoughts, Klein seemed to recall the time when he was in the hall of the Blackthorn Security

Company. It was like when he was about to activate his Spirit Vision to probe the mental state of Megose and the baby in her womb.

That feeling was exactly the same as it was now!

No, it's even more extreme and terrifying right now!

How could this be? Wasn't Lanevus just bestowed with a little bit of the True Creator's godhood? At most, he would be given one or two other corresponding items! Why does it feel like an evil god is about to descend?

Before Klein could shake off the trembling of his body and the numbing of his thoughts, he suddenly felt a deep, serene, and profound darkness engulfing the feeling that couldn't be looked at, probed, or resisted.

The two sensations were obliterated at the same time, causing the gas lamps in the surrounding area to light up once again. The airship which couldn't stop itself from plummeting floated back up again.

Everything seemed to return to its original state, without the slightest change.

But Klein didn't believe that everything was over. He stood up with all his might, knowing that something important had happened in the red-brick building.

The feeling that exceeds a Beyonder, at a fundamental level, is no longer there, nor is there the feeling of the descent of an evil god. This means that the True Creator or Lanevus's plot has failed… However, the Nighthawks must've suffered some sort of serious blow as well. They might not even have much strength left… At that moment, Klein's heart stirred. He quickly took out the spirit pendulum inside his left sleeve, holding it with one hand as he said in a low voice, "Lanevus is no longer dangerous at the moment."

After quickly repeating it seven times, he opened his eyes and saw that the topaz pendant was rotating counterclockwise. However, its frequency

wasn't fast, and its amplitude wasn't large.

This showed that Lanevus was still a dangerous man but to a lesser degree.

What caught Klein's attention was something else.

The divination hadn't failed again!

This meant that Lanevus had been separated from the godhood bestowed upon him by the True Creator!

A cold wind blew, seeping deep into Klein's bones, causing him to shiver. He felt as if an electric current had instantly drilled into his brain from the soles of his feet.

Maybe I can do something! He suddenly had this thought and no longer hesitated. He took four steps counterclockwise in the dark clock tower and went above the gray fog.

Without wasting any time, he sat down and conjured a piece of yellowish-brown goatskin parchment and wrote a divination statement:

"Lanevus's escape route."

Klein leaned back, quickly chanted the statement, and entered a deep dream.

In that illusory, separated, misty world, he saw the slush-filled sewers with their dark, dirty tunnels and rusty metal pipes.

It was cramped and sealed.

It's the sewers!

Klein immediately woke up, enveloped his body with spirituality, and descended into the gray fog.

As soon as he returned to the real world, he took a few steps back and came to the side of the clock tower that faced away from the airship.

Klein didn't walk down the spiral stairs but instead somersaulted over the dark yellow fence. With the help of the platform, the bulging spots, and the decorations on the surface of the building, he jumped down level by level, his body was so balanced it was if though he was walking on the ground.

In a very short period of time, his feet stepped on the thick flagstones on the street.

…

Inside the small red-brick building, two Nighthawks wearing red gloves had collapsed by the door unconscious. The ancient silver-plated mirror had rolled to a corner, but it was no longer special. It no longer looked anything like a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact.

However, one could clearly feel that it was recovering bit by bit.

Crestet Cesimir was kneeling at an intersection, a stream of tear-like blood streaked down the corners of his eyes.

His short, golden-brown hair hung limply, and his standing collars on his windbreaker and shirt were in tatters, revealing his relatively sharp chin and his thin, stiff mouth.

Gasping for air, a distorted, semi-illusory, and translucent face appeared on each of his teeth.

Cesimir braced himself with his left red-gloved hand on the ground, with difficulty, he straightened his neck and looked straight ahead.

Directly in front of him was the staircase to the second floor, above which stood Lanevus who had his linen shirt completely unbuttoned.

Lanevus stood very straight, with the pure white, smooth bone sword stuck in his chest.

The skinless flesh no longer formed the outline of the hanging man's figure, leaving behind a void.

Vaguely, one could even see his back through the hole in Lanevus's body.

Lanevus moved with great difficulty before suddenly laughing loudly. He said with a maniacal laugh, "Haha, haha, thank you!

"I really need to thank you!

"For real. Look at my sincere eyes. I really want to thank you!

"If you hadn't discovered me and arrived in time, I would truly become the vessel of the True Creator when 'He' descends in a few months. When that happens, how different would it be from dying?"

Cesimir was stunned when he heard that. He refused to believe that the person who had his crutch destroyed thanks to his hard work would be so happy.

At that moment, he wished to stand, but he couldn't. He was also powerless to resist.

When Lanevus saw his confusion, he coughed and said with a smile, "Do you know? To people like me, it's the most miserable thing when there's no one to share a great accomplishment that I'm proud of.

"Cough, when I was in Tingen City, I was deceived by the True Creator who not only initiated the descent of his spawn, but he also secretly planted a 'sapling' in my body.

"No, I even believe that Megose's child was just 'His' ruse. 'He' didn't even get the members of the Aurora Order to protect her to divert attention. It

was as though 'He' knew from the beginning that the ploy would end in failure.

"'His' true descent was set up inside me. The godhood 'He' bestowed upon me suddenly combined with the 'sapling' in my body after I reached Backlund. Haha, can you imagine that? I was being replaced bit by bit by 'Him!' In the end, I would become the True Creator.

"Before I came up with a solution, I was found by the members of the Aurora Order through the godhood. Thankfully, they're all lunatics with simple brains. Haha, there are always so many fools."

Cough! Cough! Cough! Lanevus spat out a mouthful of foul blood, seemingly recovering some of his mobility.

He took a difficult step forward, and his chiseled face suddenly turned soft for some unknown reason as he began resembling his original self.

Lanevus reached out to the staircase's handrail and laughed tauntingly.

"Thankfully, if the True Creator wishes to fully descend and completely replace me, He'll need large amounts of pessimism, despair, numbness, resentment and primitive evil. Only Backlund—only East Borough, the factory and dock area, could satisfy His requirements. This gave me a chance to interact with others.

"I knew that it was unrealistic to report this to the police simply through the people I interacted with because the people I come in contact could very well be members of the Aurora Order.

"I initially wanted to instigate a strike to get the police to notice me, but I was warned by someone from the Aurora Order. After being tortured, I could only hastily end it.

"I acted as though I was on the brink of losing control and had gained the opportunity to head into the sewers to vent. During this process, I secretly

used my blood to corrupt the creatures living in there, turning them into terrifying mutated monsters. Unfortunately, before you could fully investigate the reason behind it, it was discovered by the Aurora Order. Apparently, a member of theirs died under a mutated monster. Sigh, now that I no longer have the godhood or the sapling, my blood no longer has such effects.

"After that, I was controlled even more strictly, but I still found an opportunity. I killed a prostitute and used the cruelest method to attract the attention of the police, but who would've thought that the people of the Aurora Order would disguise the case as part of series of serial murders? I still failed to receive the rescue I needed.

"Out of similar opportunities, I could only use a more ingenious method. I took the initiative to request for the fiercest, craziest, most radical member of the Aurora Order to watch me, and this suited their thoughts. Hehe, can't they use their brains? Such a lunatic would get into trouble at any moment. As expected, you guys came!"

Phew… At that moment, Lanevus exhaled and began to move his body, as if he had finally gotten rid of the remnant effects.

He pulled out the holy bone sword from his chest and said regretfully, "What a pity. I can't take it with me; otherwise, I would be quickly tracked and found by you."

After the pure white bone sword completely separated from his body, not a single drop of blood remained from the exaggerated wound. The part that had disappeared didn't seem to belong to Lanevus.

Lanevus pressed his right hand against his chest, bowing as he faced Crestet Cesimir and company.

"The people on the airship outside should be recovering soon. I can't stay any longer.

"Thank you, thank you very much.

"Although you're all very stupid, you still ultimately helped me.

"It's an honor for foolish bastards like yourselves."

Having said this, he straightened his body and smiled tauntingly, "Goodbye, foolish Nighthawks.

"Use your lives to send me off."

Grasping the bone sword in his hand, he abruptly took a few steps forward, attempting to stab at Crestet Cesimir.

But at that moment, his eyelids began to grow heavy, as he felt like collapsing into a slumber.

"So you still have some strength. This is troublesome…" Lanevus bit his tongue gently and suddenly threw the holy bone sword at the unconscious Nighthawk by the door.

"No!"

Cesimir waved his hand with the strength he accumulated through painstaking means, causing an invisible entity to divert the holy bone sword.

Lanevus seized that opportunity and dashed to the side. He somersaulted out the red-brick building through the window at the washroom at the end of the corridor.

Soon after, he opened a manhole cover along the streets and quickly climbed into the sewers.

Lanevus seemed to be very familiar with this place. Even though it was dark, he could still run, jump, and turn, quickly fleeing deep into the maze

of sewers.

Suddenly, he instinctively stopped and leaned back.

Oof!

A card had stabbed deep into his right chest and blood began dripping profusely from its edge.

Lanevus looked up, and with his ability to see in the dark, he saw his attacker.

It was a medium-sized man in a worker's uniform, wearing a mask with a raised mouth and red nose.

It was a happy clown.

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CHAPTER 287
DEATH BATTLE

The moment their eyes met, Lanevus suddenly ducked and rolled forward.

Clang!

A tarot card, with an angel and trumpet, shot out sharply like a dagger, embedding itself into the wall of the sewer, and its position was at the same height as Lanevus's neck just moments before.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Lanevus either rolled, jumped to his side, or threw himself forward, nimbly avoiding the three cards that came in succession with abnormal agility. Their collision with the walls, slabs, and concrete echoed like metal striking a wall.

Meanwhile, out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the man in the clown mask was following him closely, not much slower than he was. In his hand was a thick stack of cards as he launched them with great familiarity and skill.

On the surface of an approaching card was a sun with five facial features. With his left hand, Lanevus propped himself up against the wall and leaped into the air, drastically changing his course.

At that moment, he heard a swishing sound before suddenly feeling a sharp pain in his ankle!

He launched two cards? One arrived slightly late and was aimed in the direction I was escaping in? Can he foresee my movements? The moment he landed on the ground, Lanevus endured the pain and rolled once again.

Clang!

Another tarot card embedded itself into his original position, resonating constantly in response to the impact.

It was only then that Lanevus noticed a card deeply embedded in his right ankle. The card depicting stars, water containers, and holy water stained in red.

Sou! Sou! Sou!

Lanevus didn't even have the luxury of time to think or treat his injuries. One after another, the cards turned into seemingly sharp flying daggers, shooting at different parts of his body.

Very soon, the injuries on his right leg and chest, and the remnant effects from the hole in his chest, as well as the prior demigod level clash caused this Sequence 9 Marauder to turn sluggish. This was in contrast to the nimbleness and speed that Marauders were known for.

Pow! He sent a card flying, but a deep laceration tore through his wrist, one that kept bleeding profusely.

The Nighthawks and the military will be coming soon. I can't delay any longer! At this moment, Lanevus's mind was very clear.

Suddenly, he stopped in his tracks and stopped dodging, allowing a card depicting the devil to strike him squarely in the neck.

In almost an instant, the cards sticking out from his body were sent flying. The hideous wounds on his neck, right chest, wrist, and ankle were all

squirming madly, sprouting one meat tendril after another in disgusting shapes!

On his skin, numerous small goosebumps appeared. These goosebumps had a metallic tint to them as if they had turned into a set of armor.

Clang! A tarot card was shot over, but it was deflected by the fine goosebumps.

With bloodshot eyes, Lanevus stared at the Clown who had put away his cards after coming to a halt. He said, half laughing and half mocking, "No matter what, after being tormented by a deity, one will always get something in return."

Before he could finish his words, he had already jumped over the polluted waters in the canal with his left foot, throwing himself at the enemy opposite him.

As if expecting this, Klein stepped to the side, pulled his left hand out of his pocket, clenched it into a fist, and threw it at Lanevus's temple.

Bam!

Lanevus swung his elbow sideways and raised his forearm, accurately hitting his opponent's fist.

The explosive force surged like a torrential tide, causing Klein's body to move from the impact as he staggered a little.

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Crisp explosive blasts sounded in Klein's ear. Punches, each heavier and faster than the last, constantly reflected into his eyes.

The flurry of attacks made him seem to forget to maintain his balance. He staggered and fell to the side, then, with the support of his left elbow, he

rolled in a different direction.

Smack! Smack! Smack! Bang! Bang! Bang!

Lanevus's punches and kicks came quickly and furiously, almost hitting Klein quite a few times, but thanks to his exaggerated balance and movements that defied common sense, he managed to dodge successfully. At times, he would be on the wall and at other times, on the ground. It was as though he was performing an acrobatic act.

He appeared very calm without the slightest bit of impatience. It was as though he had decided to drag out the battle as long as possible until the Nighthawks and the military arrived.

And once there were any signs of Lanevus's attempting to escape, he was hell-bent on pestering him and not give him an opportunity to do so.

Pa!

Lanevus's punch forced Klein to use the rebound from the wall to fly back into the air, and as for him, himself, he didn't hesitate to turn around and flee towards another tunnel.

The moment Klein's toes touched the ground, his body shot out like a cannonball as he pounced straight for Lanevus's back.

At that moment, an image appeared in his mind.

"It seems as if Lanevus has no bones. I should force him to twist his upper body and land a punch on his body."

This was a Clown's intuition!

Without any doubts or hesitation, Klein took the initiative to reduce his subsequent strength.

With a smacking sound, he still threw himself forward, but it was much weaker than he expected.

Kacha!

With a jarring noise, Lanevus twisted his upper body suddenly while his legs remained immobile. His face faced backward as his toes pointed forward.

In such a terrifying scene, Lanevus threw a punch towards Klein's head. The force of the punch was so strong that even the air produced an explosive boom.

Boom!

His fist hit nothing but air, and his fist was still twenty or thirty centimeters from Klein's face.

The winds, that stirred from the punch, blew through Klein's hair, but he didn't take the opportunity to attack the enemy. Instead, he croaked a single word in ancient Hermes, "Crimson!"

A charm? Lanevus scrunched his face as he immediately jumped to the side in a bid to dodge the impending attack.

However, Klein had yet to throw out the charm. Instead, he clenched his left fist tightly and followed in the direction of Lanevus.

He similarly threw himself to the side and rolled on the ground as well, causing the distance between them to only widen slightly.

It was a bluff? Just as this thought flashed through his mind, the highly-raised corners of the Clown's mouth were clearly reflected in his eyes. There was also a dark red flame which had unknowingly ignited in the Clown's left fist.

This… Lanevus's gaze immediately froze.

A light crackling sound entered his ears, and a calm, tranquil feeling emanated instantly, enveloping him and Klein.

What is he trying to do? He wants both of us… to be affected at the same time… to allow for… the Nighthawks and military… to rush here in time… Lanevus's eyelids drooped heavily, and the fatigue and weakness he had been suppressing began to rear their heads uncontrollably.

He did his best not to fall asleep, hoping to rely on the uniqueness of his body to endure through the most intense period of the charm's slumbering effects.

As for Klein, he didn't choose to resist at all and quickly entered a deep slumber.

However, whenever he fell asleep unnaturally, he would instinctively wake up!

This was the unique thing about him when fighting mediumship and dream invasions!

This was the reason why he had been lucky enough to escape from the hands of Madam Sharon back in Tingen!

In the fight just now, after throwing his cards proved ineffective, he immediately took out the Slumber Charm and gripped it tightly in his palm, waiting for the opportunity to affect himself and his enemy!

In just a split-second, he forcibly broke free from the abnormal state of mind in his dream. The figure of the staggering Lanevus was clearly reflected in his eyes.

Phew! Klein suddenly became very calm, as though what was before him was nothing but a target.

He took a deep breath, turned his waist, and pulled back his shoulder before thrusting his fist forward with all his strength!

Bam! Kacha!

His fist landed ruthlessly at Lanevus's throat, breaking his bones and splattering his flesh.

Lanevus took two steps back and leaned against the wall.

That intense pain finally allowed him to extricate himself from the slumbering effects, but the fine iron-colored goosebumps on his body were all gone.

After Klein's punch landed, he reached into his pocket with his left hand and pulled out two cards.

Sou! Sou!

The two cards each stabbed into an eye as scarlet liquid gushed out.

Lanevus surprisingly endured the pain without letting out a tragic cry. Instead, he abruptly threw himself forward in a bid to make his last stand!

Klein didn't take advantage of the situation to attack. Having long expected this, he turned his body to the side and took a step back.

Right on the heels of that, while seizing the moment when Lanevus's fell forward, he took two steps and arrived behind him. He reached out with his arms and grabbed his enemy's neck.

Kacha!

Klein's arms exerted force, and he suddenly turned around, twisting Lanevus's neck!

After doing all of this, he took two steps back and looked at his enemy.

With the card embedded in him, Lanevus looked ahead weakly as he slumped to the ground. At the same time, he was very confused and asked in a staccato manner, "Why… do you… want to… kill me…”

With his clown mask on, Klein stared at his archenemy and replied indifferently, "No reason."

"No…” With his eyes wide open, Lanevus collapsed to the ground in the sewers, unable to accept his fate. Finally, his breathing came to a stop.

At that moment, Klein, who seemed to be extremely calm, suddenly stepped forward, tightened his right leg, and, with all his strength, kicked him in the head.

Bam!

His neck, which was already badly mutilated, could no longer bear the pressure and was sent flying like a rubber ball. It slammed heavily into the wall, creating a red and white patch!

Upon seeing this scene, Klein suddenly crouched down.

"Hahaha, hahaha!

"Hahahahahaha."

He laughed crazily with a suppressed voice. The "clown" mask looked so very happy.

The corners of those raised lips, the bright red nose, and that white face wore a very happy expression.

"Haha, haha… Hahaha…” Klein laughed so much that he went out of breath; his laughter was more jarring than crying.

After a few seconds, he finally calmed down. He slowly straightened his body and winked with his left eye at the darkest part of the sewer. Then, he smirked and muttered to himself, "Captain…

"Look, we've saved Loen once again…”

Droplets of liquid quietly slid down and landed on his collar.

At that moment, he felt that his Clown potion had been digested completely.

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CHAPTER 288
A SCENE FILLED WITH SYMBOLISM

In the dark sewer, Klein wiped his neck and turned his attention back to Lanevus's cracked head and decapitated body before turning to the two tarot cards that were stuck in Lanevus's eyes.

He originally wanted to retrieve all the projectiles that he had thrown and wipe the scene of any clues. However, he realized a very real and extremely serious problem.

He didn't have the vision to see in complete darkness.

He had relied on his Spirit Vision to rush through the pitch black sewers and engage in the intense battle with Lanevus!

He could see the colors of Lanevus's aura, the spirituality radiance of all sorts of critters, and could faintly use the lights "illumination" to distinguish the path.

Unfortunately, the tarot cards he was currently using weren't the same as the ones that had originated from the Nighthawks. It didn't have any spirituality or silver engravings, and it was completely ordinary with no special characteristics.

In such an environment, Klein could use his own aura's color and spirituality radiance to create a tiny radius around him where he could distinguish things. However, he couldn't see the cards stuck in the walls and

ground, as well as the cards that had scattered everywhere. In the intense battle with Lanevus, they hadn't restricted themselves to a particular spot.

Of course, he believed that as long as he had enough time, it wouldn't be difficult to find all the cards he had thrown out, but the main problem was that the Nighthawks and the military on board the airship would arrive at any minute!

I can't be too careless regarding this… I've been wearing gloves all this time… This deck of tarot cards was bought before coming to Backlund and is standard across the nation… I don't usually use it… Most of the time, even if I have it with me, it's placed together with Mr. Azik's copper whistle… Regardless of what methods are used, it would be very difficult to locate me through them. At most, they would be able to restore a portion of the battle scene; I donned a mask, and my shoes are padded… All sorts of thoughts flashed through Klein's mind, and he quickly came to a decision.

He turned to the headless corpse and crouched down. Reaching out with his black-gloved right hand, he quickly searched for any items left behind.

Klein didn't have the intention of carrying out a mediumship ritual. Firstly, the feeling of the evil god's descent had left a deep impression on him, so he didn't dare to blindly channel Lanevus's spirit unless he brought it above the gray fog with him. Secondly, with the situation of the Nighthawks and military arriving at anytime, he didn't feel that he had enough time to set up the ritual of summoning himself, responding to himself, and then going up above the gray fog and channelling the spirit.

I should give up when it's necessary… Klein silently muttered to himself, and he withdrew his hand from Lanevus's body.

This crazy swindler seemed to be in a hurry when escaping. He didn't bring any cash, materials, or charms. He only had an eye-sized badge on him which coruscated a faint spirituality radiance.

Klein wasn't afraid that this item could be used to locate him as he planned on throwing it above the gray fog later to study it slowly. Therefore, he stood up and put the badge in his pocket.

He stole a glance at Lanevus's corpse, and without waiting for the Beyonder characteristic to appear, he used his left black-gloved hand to remove the remaining tarot cards.

Then he stretched out his left arm and placed his palm directly above the Lanevus's corpse.

All of a sudden, Klein released his grip, allowing the tarot cards to fall, like leaves cascading over the headless corpse. Some of them faced up with pictures and numbers printed on them, whilst others had dark red patterns on their backs.

After doing all of this, Klein took out Azik's copper whistle and tossed it a few times. Then, without looking back, he ran deep into the sewers.

After almost two minutes, figures finally arrived at this place. Some of them were wearing thick black windbreakers, while others were wearing well-tailored military uniforms.

The leader of the group was Crestet Cesimir, who was carrying a pure white bone sword. His red gloves were smeared with dust, and his determined face showed obvious signs of fatigue and frailty.

They stopped a few meters away from the body, and through the means of their night vision, they could see Lanevus's corpse and his head against the wall.

There were two tarot cards stuck in his head. One was The Emperor and the other was Wheel of Fortune.

The headless body was covered with even more cards, each separately depicting The Chariot, The Hermit, Death, and more cards of different suits

comprising of chalice, scepters, etc.

On the walls and on the ground around him, there were also tarot cards such as The Devil, The Sun, and Judgment.

It all looked like the scene of some bizarre ritual, and Lanevus was the sacrificial offering that was destined to be sacrificed.

Crestet Cesimir drew a silent gasp as he knitted his brows tightly. The Beyonders around him fell into a momentary daze at the sight of this frightening and mysterious scene in the darkness.

…

Far away from the scene of Lanevus's death, Klein quickly found an exit and left. He took off his clown mask and, in the shadows of the gas lamps, walked quickly towards East Borough.

Before that, he had already dealt with the stains on the soles of his shoes.

It was only when he reached Black Palm Street in the East Borough did he breathe a slight sigh of relief. Then, he quickly held the ritual of summoning himself inside his rented one-bedroom apartment and responded to himself.

In his spiritual body state, Klein moved all the clothes he had worn tonight, as well as the remaining charms, herbs, and essential oils, as well as the badge he had obtained from Lanevus to the space above the gray fog. Then, he used a spiritual flame to burn the corresponding clues.

Phew… He exhaled and finally had time to take a look at what the badge he had taken from Lanevus looked like.

This badge was only the size of an eyeball. On the front was a symbol that depicted fate and concealment, and behind it was a ring of tiny and compact words in ancient Hermes.

"You can join if you have this item."

What does it mean? Was Lanevus also a member of some secret organization? Klein rubbed his temples. In a situation where he was physically and mentally exhausted, along with the fact that the timing wasn't right, he decided to give up on his research and leave it til after the Tarot Club's gathering.

He quickly left the mysterious space above the gray fog, changed into another set of clothes, and removed his disguise.

However, he was in no hurry to return to Minsk Street. He planned to sleep for the night before leaving. This was because it was easy to be inspected after midnight, especially when such an accident had just occurred.

He lay down on the bed, looked out the window at the moonlight's encroaching of the darkness, and gradually calmed down.

After completing his initial revenge, he felt that he had relieved himself of a lot of his burdens and lost a lot of his pressure. His mental state was clearly much better than before.

The present me isn't capable of handling Ince Zangwill and Sealed Artifact 0-08. Besides, the gap between us is huge. Only after becoming a High-Sequence Beyonder, a demigod, would I have the qualifications to involve myself in such matters… Before advancing to Sequence 4, I'll act as though they don't exist…

Yea, for the foreseeable future, my goal is to work hard to improve myself. Now that I've completely digested the Clown potion, I can advance to Magician once the Beyonder ingredients are gathered.

There's still Faceless, Nimblewright Master, and the corresponding Sequence 4 which I don't know the name of.

Other than that, I'll just be an ordinary detective.

Klein's mind was calm and peaceful, and his thoughts were scattered as he thought about his future arrangements. He was no longer cranky or that depressed.

As he thought about it, the corners of his lips curled up slightly as he silently muttered to himself.

Captain, Benson, Melissa, I believe all of you would prefer to see me like this…

…

At dawn, a group of people wearing surgical hats and white masks came to the Dock Union's dormitory. They were all dressed as doctors.

The elder in the lead appeared to be rich in experience as he said to the puzzled and confused residents, "We've discovered an infectious disease in this building. A person named Kevin has already passed away because of it.

"We will provide free treatment. This infectious disease has a special drug, and as long as you take it in time, you'll be fine."

"Kevin?" One by one, the guests exclaimed in astonishment as they looked around for their colleague named Kevin. However, they didn't find him at all.

That was Lanevus's alias.

Seeing that the charity medical team was accompanied by police officers, the residents no longer had any doubts and began to line up nervously to collect their medicine.

The first was a middle-aged man with a bushy beard. He nervously asked all sorts of questions, afraid that a single bottle of medicine wasn't potent enough to fight off the infectious disease.

It wasn't until the doctors showed their impatience that he drank the blue bottle of medicine.

Then, he was helped to the side and aimed his mouth at a hole that was of the same size.

Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!

The man suddenly felt nauseous as he violently vomited a putrid blob of a bloody substance.

He was about to prop himself up and cast his gaze to see what he had just vomited when two strong nurses yanked him away.

The mouth-sized hole was located above an iron-black metal barrel. The bottom of the barrel was dark and deep, with almost no light coming from it.

And right there, a pool of yellowish-green liquid was quietly resting at the bottom. In the middle of the pool was a small piece of blood-colored meat.

Ugh! Ugh! Ugh!

One by one, the residents took the medicine and vomited in front of different metal barrels.

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Count Hall.

"Why did you suddenly visit so early?" Audrey looked at the sky outside, then she looked at Viscount Glaint.

Glaint looked around and only found a golden retriever sitting beside him. Hence, he whispered, "I was planning to go to the turf club, but I met Kance

on the way. He told me something very interesting. It's truly interesting. Since I was passing by here, I thought of coming to share it with you."

"What is it?" Audrey asked with interest.

Glaint didn't deliberate over his words as he replied, "You should've heard of the Aurora Order, right? It was the Aurora Order that assassinated the Intis ambassador. They were caught, with several important members killed, and a very large ploy was foiled as a result."

I thought it was something related to the godhood of the True Creator. Xio and Fors sent someone to report the information yesterday evening, and it just so happened that an operation was held last night… Wait, the Aurora Order apparently worships the True Creator! Audrey's eyes lit up. She pressed in a reserved tone, "What ploy?"

"I don't know, Kance refused to say. He just told me that the person in charge of this ploy was once a wanted swindler, a swindler named Lanevus." Glaint spread out his right hand.

As expected… Audrey nodded indiscernibly. She didn't conceal her curiosity and asked, "Was he caught?"

"He's dead, but he wasn't killed by our people." Glaint paused for a moment. "This is what I meant by interesting. When his body was found, it was covered with many tarot cards. Same for the surroundings. You can imagine that scene…"

Tarot cards? The body was covered with tarot cards? Audrey was startled at first before it hit her.

This was done by our Tarot Club!

It was Mr. Fool's adorer!

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CHAPTER 289
CONJECTURE AND INVESTIGATION

Audrey, who thought she knew the truth, couldn't help but imagine the scene described by Viscount Glaint.

Lanevus lying in the mud in the darkness, covered with rows and rows of tarot cards. There's The Fool, Justice, The Hanged Man, The Sun, The World, and the other Major Arcana cards and numerous numbered cards. They would either be overturned or facing right up, and there would be some left unturned, exposing only their backs, as if they were all part of a large-scale, eerie tarot divination.

This kind of scene must be very shocking!

I wonder where the card for Justice landed…

How would the Beyonders of MI9 and the Church view this matter? Would they believe that a new secret organization has appeared?

By possessing the godhood of the True Creator, the ploy between Lanevus and the Aurora Order must definitely be significant. It definitely would've brought a terrible disaster to Backlund and the kingdom. Yet, this ploy was so easily foiled because of a simple mission Mr. Fool had issued!

This is a tussle at the level of deities?

Mr. Fool and the True Creator are considered archenemies?

It's no wonder He calls the other party the Fallen Creator…

Many thoughts flashed through Audrey's mind as her body trembled faintly and imperceptibly.

"What are you thinking about?" Viscount Glaint, who was sitting opposite, finally couldn't hold it in any further as he asked in puzzlement.

Audrey abruptly snapped out of her reverie. Slightly cocking her head, she smiled and said, "Didn't you tell me to imagine the scene of the corpse being covered with tarot cards?"

"Haha." Glaint awkwardly smiled and sighed. "I wonder which secret organization's member killed Lanevus. It really matches how I imagined such things to be like. It's so—so cool!"

It's our Tarot Club! Audrey answered silently as she smiled. "Perhaps there's no organization, but the independent act of a powerful Beyonder?"

"Regardless, I like this style! Urge Xio and Fors and ask them when they can find my Apothecary formula," Glaint said in excitement.

Audrey widened her eyes slightly. Looking around her, she lowered her voice and said, "Hush, keep it down.

"How can you talk about potions here?"

Glaint gave an indifferent smile. "Don't worry. it's nothing. I had already confirmed that other than you and me, there's only a dog."

The huge golden retriever, Susie, unconsciously shifted her position.

…

North Borough in Backlund. Inside a room beneath the Saint Samuel Cathedral.

Daly, who was wearing a black hooded robe and make-up with blue eyeshadow and red blush, gave off a charming yet cold feeling. She randomly found a seat and picked up the document on the table.

She swept through it before her gaze suddenly froze. Her brows immediately furrowed, and she suppressed something as she asked, "Lanevus?

"Why wasn't I informed of this matter?

"Why didn't you inform me about the operation last night?"

Sitting at the seat of honor, Crestet Cesimir, who had hidden his chin and lips back into his propped up collar, said deeply, "I was afraid that you wouldn't be able to control your emotions. That would've brought unnecessary danger to the operation, so I didn't get anyone to inform you.

"I can understand how you feel. A Nighthawk from the Tingen squad is currently undergoing guidance and training at the Holy Cathedral. He plans on joining the Red Gloves, and his performance is about equal to yours. But as the person in charge of the operation, and as a high-ranking deacon of the Nighthawks, I had to eliminate all unstable elements."

Daly looked at the other Nighthawk Squad Captains and deacons, and she sneered.

"Why do you think I won't be able to control my own emotions? I'm very calm and I won't act rashly!

"My anger will only erupt after Lanevus is caught! This is the professional bearing of a veteran Nighthawk and a deacon!

"If I had caught Lanevus, I would let him know that men can be weak too! I would make sure that a cold, rotten, yet stiff corpse would be situated behind his buttocks. I would make sure that a pungent white bone filled

with thorns would be situated in front of him. I'd make it so that those cold little fellows enter and leave his body wherever they can!

"Damn it! You actually managed to let him die just like that!"

Crestet Cesimir looked at Daly calmly and sighed after silently listening to her until she was done.

"How long have you been putting up with it?"

Daly froze, then muttered in frustration, like a deflated ball, "For a very long time…"

Cesimir retracted his gaze and cast them towards the other deacons and captains.

"Got anything?"

"From our preliminary investigations, the person who killed Lanevus is a member of the Secret Order, a Sequence 8 of the potion name, Clown. He's adept at using paper cards as flying knives." A deacon reported based on the findings. "However, we are unable to confirm this guess. The tarot cards scattered across the corpse don't seem like they were concealing something. After all, the Beyonder didn't deal with the cards on the wall and in Lanevus's head. We all believe the final scene was more of a ritual or a symbolism. Therefore, we suspect that the Beyonder might belong to an organization we don't understand. Of course, the scene might also just be a personal preference of his."

Cesimir nodded slightly and said, "We can start from that point and proceed with a follow-up investigation.

"Aiur, any updates on the person who tipped us off?"

The charming middle-aged man, Aiur Harson, flipped the papers in his hand and said, "We investigated the person and discovered that his actions were

directed by a bounty hunter.

"In the process of looking for the wanted criminal, Lanevus, the balam's companion was killed by a member of the Aurora Order. In order to exact revenge, she secretly carried out an investigation and eventually locked onto the target at the Workers Alliance Tavern in East Balam Dock. Based on the target's actions and lifestyle, she discovered Lanevus.

"Her actions have basically been verified by witnesses. There isn't anything strange about it. We also used Beyonder means to confirm that she has no connection with the person who killed Lanevus.

"She's in hiding now, and it's very hard to find her."

Cesimir added while seemingly in thought, "This fits very well with Lanevus's description, that the radical and insane members of the Aurora Order were helping him out.

"Is there any problem with the reporter who did the interview at the union that afternoon?"

Another captain of the Nighthawks reported, "He was a fake reporter, and according to news from the police department, he's actually a private detective who had previously helped Mike Joseph of the Daily Observer. Joseph was investigating the murder of Siber. We suspect that he got some kind of lead, found the Dock Union and disguised himself to get in touch with everyone who was suspected of being the killer.

"This guess has already been confirmed by Isengard Stanton."

Cesimir acknowledged it before switching to ask about other people who had recently come into contact with Lanevus, but similarly got answers that there was nothing wrong with them.

Towards the end, he said after some deliberation, "I'm very confused by the lack of motive for the murder of Lanevus. That mysterious murderer

deserves our attention. You should continue to follow up on this matter.

"In addition, according to common sense, the Aurora Order definitely wouldn't only have Beyonders at the Rose Bishop and Shadow Ascetic level in a big city like Backlund. There should at least be an Oracle, or perhaps even a Saint.

"Their ploy of receiving the True Creator's descent has failed. With their crazy and irrational traits, I'm worried that they'll launch a series of retaliatory acts. All of you are to be on high alert in the near future. I'll also be staying in Backlund."

"Yes, Your Grace," the deacons and captains replied solemnly.

Crestet Cesimir paused for a few seconds before adding, "The events of the Megose incident in Tingen and last night's incident with Lanevus have revealed a problem. The industrial area, the dock area, and East Borough have become hotbeds for the descent and nurturing of evil gods. You are to send people to investigate and gather the truth about the situation.

"If it truly is as Lanevus had described, I'll raise this matter at the Council of Cardinals, formally exerting pressure on the kingdom and the government to bring about the corresponding changes as soon as possible."

…

Klein slept in and didn't wake up until it was late. However, it still wasn't bright enough outside. The area was still shrouded in fog, making it dark and cold.

This doesn't fit with my splendid mood… He grumbled. After changing his clothes and taking his key, he returned to Minsk Street unnoticed.

After changing from his worker's uniform to casual home attire—a shirt and sweater—and after confirming that no one came investigating his identity as a private detective, he was completely at ease. He leisurely went out to

the butcher and grocery store to buy food in preparation for a sumptuous lunch for himself.

There was some afternoon sun in Backlund, and Klein lazily basked in its worth, momentarily having no desire to do anything.

He waited until fifteen minutes to three, then he took out his golden pocket watch for a glance before returning to the bedroom and going above the gray fog.

After conjuring the fake World and familiarizing himself with its controls, he sat down on the high back chair at one end of the table and gave a message to The Sun that he was to prepare for his participation in the gathering.

At precisely three, according to Backlund time, streaks of crimson light soared out of the vast and ancient palace, outlining blurry figures which were equally indistinct.

Audrey directly looked towards the seat of honor and said cheerfully, "Good afternoon, Mr. Fool.

"The 'simple' mission you entrusted has been completed."

She had deliberately emphasized the word "simple" in order to ascertain from Mr. Fool whether Lanevus had really been eliminated by his adorer. She wanted to know if the tarot card-covered death scene was a symbol of the Tarot Club.

Klein deliberately acted composed as he said with a smile, "I'm already aware."

After saying that, he sighed.

"In such an age, in such a place like Backlund, in such a place in the East Borough, the dock area, and the factory district, they're the hotbeds for an

evil god's descent."

What? Alger was stunned for a moment, wondering if there was something wrong with his ears.

Why would a simple mission involve hotbeds for an evil god's descent?

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CHAPTER 290
EFFECTING CHANGE INDIRECTLY

I remember that the simple mission given by Mr. Fool was for the sole purpose of examining two people for their candidacy of joining the gathering. The general idea was to find the person in the portrait, and that person was confirmed to be in Backlund… Alger Wilson tried to remember what had happened the last gathering, and he couldn't understand what it had to do with the hotbed of an evil god's descent.

Wasn't it just the search for someone?

Furthermore, it was the kind of task which didn't pose much of a threat…

Was there a deeper purpose behind Mr. Fool's simple mission? Was this a silent contest between deities?

Many thoughts went through The Hanged Man's mind instantly, and he almost couldn't stop himself from asking Justice, tempted to pay in order to understand what exactly was going on.

However, as a veteran official Beyonder, a Seafarer who steered an ancient ghost ship, he was experienced and shrewd. He forcefully suppressed his impulse and planned to go through the internal channels of the Church of the Lord of Storms to find out about the recent events in Backlund.

As for Audrey, she instantly understood what Mr. Fool's sigh meant. She immediately understood the entire situation regarding Lanevus.

So it turns out that the bit of godhood that Lanevus possessed was the basic foundation for the descent of the True Creator into the real world… The harsh situation in East Borough, the dock area, and the factory area, however, was a hotbed that provided "Him" rapid nurturing and strengthening… With a simple mission, Mr. Fool stopped the True Creator's great conspiracy and saved the whole of Backlund! Audrey looked towards the end of the long bronze table, her eyes sparkling brightly. Unconsciously, she brimmed with admiration.

At this moment, the gloomy and reserved World let out a chuckled and said, "Yes, every time I see and hear about a large number of child laborers dying in their teens, and how most workers rarely live past thirty due to extreme exhaustion and the terrible environment, or how after barely surviving the previous tests and as a result of their old age and the loss of their jobs, they can only wander the streets and die of hunger and cold, I have no doubt about the existence of an evil god. These gods are on the ground, in East Borough, the dock area, and the factory area.

"Well, there's even been a report that some factory workers have a hard time surviving five years.

"In the East Borough of Backlund, there's a saying that among the people who live there, without exception, any person who's a grandfather must be from the countryside.

"The meaning of this sentence is that people living there won't have a third generation as they can't have grandchildren.

"Poverty and hunger make their children very thin. Work that's difficult to adapt to causes them to quickly wither away in Backlund, much less getting married and conceiving the next generation."

This was the first time Audrey heard Mr. World speak so much. She was suddenly plunged into deep shock and confusion.

Why don't I know anything about this… The newspapers and magazines I read only mention that the residents of East Borough are having a hard time… This is far worse than being laborious… Audrey's eyes lost their focus for a moment. She felt as if her understanding of the kingdom and the world had been completely overturned.

Suddenly, she understood why Mr. Fool had uttered such a sigh, and why in such an age, such a Backlund, in such an East Borough, the dock area, and the factory district were the hotbeds of an evil god's descent.

We can't go on like this! Otherwise, Backlund will one day be destroyed because of this! Audrey felt a strong urge to go back and learn more, to remind her father, Count Hall. She wanted to use the powers of a Spectator and a Telepathist to secretly guide the governmental policies that would improve the lives of the pitiful people in East Borough, the docks area, and the factory district.

At the end of the long bronze table, Klein quietly observed Miss Justice's reaction.

He had purposely lamented a while ago and used his smurf, The World, to give a detailed explanation. He wanted this noble, one who still had a semblance of purity to realize the seriousness of the problem and use her to push for change in the kingdom.

Before I become Faceless, I must clearly remember that I cannot be personally involved in such matters… He silently set such a boundary for himself.

"Thank you, Mr. Fool. Thank you for saving Backlund. Your sigh has made me understand the problem at its roots. Thank you, Mr. World. You have made me understand a great deal of the situation I didn't know in the past." Audrey held back her emotions and sincerely thanked the two gentlemen at the two ends of the table.

"Saved Backlund?" Alger was no stranger to the conditions of East Borough, the factory district, and the dock area. He was more surprised by the description Miss Justice had used.

Just how huge was this matter? he thought with an extremely puzzled frown.

The Sun, on the other hand, listened quite attentively, and although he couldn't understand all of it, he still listened attentively, hoping to learn more about the regions where Mr. Hanged Man, Miss Justice, and Mr. World were located.

Klein only smiled in response to Miss Justice's gratitude and didn't do anything further. He then turned to look at The Hanged Man.

Alger immediately understood what he meant, and he quickly conjured the last page of the promised Roselle's diary.

Klein received it out of thin air and took a casual glance at it.

"14th January. I discovered a problem. If unconscious High-Sequence Beyonder objects are not sealed, they would unconsciously attract nearby Low-Sequence Beyonders from the same pathway, causing them to come into contact with each other. The higher the original Sequence, the more likely that this will happen.

"However, this situation doesn't seem to be a constant. It seems to be intermittent."

This diary entry immediately jolted Klein to attention because he had made similar guesses before.

After he came to Backlund, he soon found himself intertwined with the Secret Order, with a Beyonder of the Seer pathway, and thus, found himself in an extremely passive and extremely dangerous situation. However, he

had also obtained the corresponding Sequences 7, 6, and 5 potion formulas as a result.

At the time, he had suspected that his transmigration involved secrets that gave him the power to resurrect, and that he would occasionally attract people and objects related to the Seer pathway, such as the Antigonus family's notebook or members of the Secret Order.

After seeing this diary entry of Emperor Roselle, Klein suddenly had a new idea.

He used the corner of his eyes to scan the thick gray fog and the illusory dark red stars below him. He muttered to himself in silence.

Could it be that the one who created that attractive force wasn't me, but this gray fog, the mysterious space above the gray fog?

This could also be considered as a secret behind my transmigration…

Without any further clues or information, Klein quickly gathered his thoughts and read the second diary entry.

"16th January, the taste of a Demoness still isn't bad."

…The corners of Klein's mouth twitched, unsure of what expression he should show.

Emperor, I have underestimated you… There's really nothing stopping you… Don't you care about the other person's previous gender? Don't you care about her experience during the "Pleasure" phase?

Suppressing the urge to exhale, Klein looked at the last entry in the diary in his hands.

"20th January. I finished making the second Card of Blasphemy.

"Let me think, let me think, where should I hide it?

"Yes, I plan to disguise it as a bookmark and insert it into a very valuable book. If the person who obtains it isn't someone fated, it would be hard to imagine that the most valuable thing in the book is actually that seemingly ordinary bookmark!

"Not bad, that's a good idea!"

…Emperor, why can't you explain more clearly? Which book did the "bookmark" go into? Before I read this, I was so happy thinking that I can follow the clues and obtain a Card of Blasphemy containing the profound secrets of the deities.… Klein was disappointed and let his gaze linger on the last paragraph.

I hope that there will be more specific information in the future entries of the Emperor's diary… He comforted himself with this sentence, leaned back, and said with a smile. "You can start your discussion freely now."

At that moment, The Sun Derrick raised his hand, having learned it from Miss Justice, and said, "Mr. World, the Beyonder weapon you gave me far exceeds my expectations. I've already accumulated enough contribution points to trade for the ingredients to advance to Sequence 8. I'll use the remaining contribution points to hire helpers to obtain a chance to obtain the true root and juice of the Mist Treant. I'll be able to complete the deal soon."

He explained in great detail, worried that his reputation of keeping his word would be suspected and destroyed.

Of course, he was telling the truth. Although the axe didn't match some of his expectations for a Beyonder weapon, its power shocked him.

That axe can create a powerful lightning bolt in just two or three strikes, and with the temporary boost from my Bard's powers, I can easily fight in close quarters with a Sequence 7 monster. If I were to encounter a monster

that's afraid of lightning, I could even easily finish it… I'm now a Light Suppliant with a certain level of magical spells. My strength has been raised qualitatively, and I can fight against even more powerful monsters… Derrick Berg felt that he had fallen in love with that Beyonder weapon.

In the City of Silver, its potency was one of the reasons to like it! The surrounding darkness and monsters in the depths of the darkness forced them to obey this rule for generations.

"Alright." The gloomy World nodded under Klein's control.

He then looked around and asked again, "Lady, Sirs, do you have any clues regarding the Dark Patterned Black Panther Spinal Fluid or Spring of the Elves Marrow Crystals?"

Audrey shook her head without hesitation. After musing for a few seconds, Alger suddenly said, "There will be a grand event held on the Sonia Sea soon. Ships from the four Pirate Kings and the six Pirate Admirals will be participating. Heh, I should call them the seven Pirate Admirals. Another person has joined the ranks.

"There'll definitely be transactions of Beyonder ingredients at such an event. It's very likely that the not-very-rare Dark Patterned Black Panther Spinal Fluid or Spring of the Elves Marrow Crystals will appear.

"I have the opportunity to participate in this event, but what can you offer in exchange?

"I'm sure you don't have the potion formula for Wind-blessed and that it'll be very difficult for you to find it in the future too."

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CHAPTER 291
SELLER AND NOTARY IN ONE

High probability of appearing… Klein controlled The World and made him laugh deeply.

"Yes, I really don't have the potion formula for Wind-blessed, nor will I have the means to obtain it anytime soon.

"However, I have an incomplete formula for a Sequence 4 potion.

"Even though it's incomplete, I think you should know its value very well. It can be exchanged for at least 10,000 gold pounds, and most of the time, you can't even buy it with money worth several times that. This is a crucial step that will lead to a human's qualitative change.

"So, are you interested? The spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther is worth between 500 and 700 pounds and the Spring of the Elves marrow crystals is between 300 and 400 pounds. I believe you'll still need to prepare an additional 9,000 pounds in cash or an item of equal value."

Klein had long since speculated that the sequence of the Sun Sequence pathway, Unshadowed, could be swapped with the same Sequence of the Sailor and Reader pathways, and this conjecture had been indirectly confirmed by Mr. A's request and in the information provided in Roselle's diary. It was even suspected to extend to the Secrets Suppliant and Spectator Sequence pathways.

Therefore, he believed that the incomplete formula of Unshadowed was an irresistible temptation for The Hanged Man who was from the Sailor pathway.

It doesn't matter if you don't have something worth 9,000 pounds for the time being, you can pay it in installments with Mr. Fool bearing witness… Klein silently added.

Currently, he was lacking the spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther, so he didn't mind letting The Hanged Man remain on credit. In any case, he didn't need to worry about the possibility of him running away.

Well, there are also latent risks. I would be at a huge disadvantage if Mr. Hanged Man suddenly dies… With such an expensive deal at hand, Klein couldn't help but feel a little apprehensive.

The incomplete formula of a Sequence 4 potion? An incomplete formula that leads to the path of a demigod? This is something that you can't even buy with money! Audrey's eyes lit up. She couldn't help hiding her curiosity as she asked before The Hanged Man could speak, "Mr. World, can I ask which Sequence 4 pathway the formula pertains to? If it's not convenient to tell me, pretend I never asked."

Mr. World actually has a Sequence 4 potion formula. Even if it's incomplete, it's still very shocking… No wonder Mr. Fool pulled him into the Tarot Club! He isn't a simple Beyonder… Well, Xio's and Fors's test mission has come to an end. Mr. Fool didn't mention if he's letting them join. Well… He must have other considerations, and maybe he needs more time to observe them. I shouldn't take the initiative to ask since it will appear impolite… Many thoughts ran through Audrey's mind at that moment.

Miss Justice's question was just what Klein wanted. He made The World reply in a husky voice, "I was planning to say it anyway.

"It's the potion formula to Sequence 4 of the Sun pathway, Unshadowed."

The Sun pathway? Derrick instantly looked towards Mr. World, who sat at other end of the long bronze table, his eyes filled with sudden eagerness and longing.

However, he maintained his silence because he knew that he was still far from the threshold of a demigod. He had to spend his limited resources to strengthen himself first.

Only caring about the near future was the way the City of Silver operated. This was because, to its residents, there might not be any future at any moment.

"Unshadowed…" Audrey nodded gracefully, then happily said, "Thank you for your answer, Mr. World!"

She felt like she had learned something important again.

"Unshadowed…" Alger muttered slowly before calmly replying, "I'm sorry. I have no need for it."

No need for it? Klein was taken aback.

This was completely different from the script he had imagined!

In his shock, he indirectly caused The World to pause, looking incredulous. It took quite a few seconds before he said, "You can first owe a portion. With Mr. Fool as witness, I believe you'll definitely make up for the rest."

"No, I really have no need for it." Alger shook his head.

No need for it… He really has no need for it… He's confident that he would gain the favor of the Church of the Lord of Storms and be bestowed with the corresponding potion directly? Or does he actually have the Sequence 4 potion formula to the Sailor pathway? The name was Cataclysmic Interrer? Klein quickly thought of two possibilities.

What should I do? Don't tell me that I should trade the Witch or Demoness of Pleasure formulas with him? Klein silently mocked himself, deliberately making The World silent for a few seconds before saying, "Other potion formulas, or some secrets I know?

"Such as… secrets of the peak-level Sequences."

Alger changed his seating posture a little as he deliberated before answering, "I personally know some secrets of peak-level Sequences. How will you guarantee that there's no overlap? How will you guarantee that the secrets you will tell me is equal in value to the Dark Patterned Black Panther Spinal Fluid and Spring of the Elves Marrow Crystals?"

"We'll each give the peak-level Sequence secret to Mr. Fool and let 'Him' decide if there's any overlap and determine their values. Mr. Fool, is that alright?" Klein manipulated The World and asked himself this question.

Then, he said with a supercilious attitude, "Sure."

Alger slowly nodded. "I have no problems with that. Let's begin."

I really want to know the secret of the peak-level Sequences… But I haven't had any extra money lately to buy it… Audrey looked enviously at The World and The Hanged Man as they each conjured a piece of goatskin parchment.

Having never worried about money since she was young, she finally experienced the taste of "poverty."

Very soon, Klein received the content written by the two members.

Without a doubt, he first looked at the goatskin parchment from The Hanged Man and discovered that the content was simple. There was only one sentence.

"The peak-level Sequence conceals the path to divinity."

Phew… Great. Otherwise, there would be a need to use other information for the exchange… Klein carefully examined The World's goatskin parchment before chuckling softly.

"It doesn't overlap.

"To most Beyonders, the secrets Mr. World is providing is of no value, but in the eyes of others, it's extremely important. This cannot be measured with money."

Hearing this conclusion, Alger immediately fell into a dilemma.

To him, getting two Beyonder ingredients at the same time wasn't a small burden. He had to sell many valuable items in order to trade for them.

To pay such a price to hear a secret that might not be very useful to him? Alger considered it for nearly twenty seconds before saying, "Mr. Fool, can you provide more hints? I can't make a decision yet."

Can't make a decision? The corner of Klein's mouth moved slightly. He knew that the words he had said to maintain his image had the opposite effect and had been ineffective. He hesitated for a moment and then smiled.

"The content he describes is a detailed supplement to the secret you know."

Detailed supplement? A detailed supplement to the path to divinity? Alger didn't hesitate any longer. He turned his head to look at The World and said in a terse and firm voice, "Deal."

Then, he immediately added, "I'll help you exchange for the spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther and the Spring of the Elves Marrow Crystals within the week.

"Of course, the premise is that they'll appear at the pirate's meet. Although the probability is very high, we still have to believe that anything could happen. If that happens, I might have to postpone it to next week, the following week, or even the next month. But don't worry, I will keep my promise."

"No problem. With Mr. Fool as witness, there's no need for me to worry," The World answered hoarsely.

After they had confirmed the transaction, Klein conjured a goatskin parchment in front of The Hanged Man.

Alger lowered his head eagerly, reading through each word voraciously.

"There is a Sequence 0 above Sequence 1!

"And Sequence 0 is the Sequence of a True God!

"They can similarly be reached through the corresponding potions and rituals."

Sequence 0? The Sequence of the True God! Alger was astonished and shocked at first, but soon he felt relieved, and then he murmured to himself in delight, *I see…*

I understand, I understand what it means!

He inhaled silently and leaned back in his chair as if nothing had happened.

That secret must be astonishing… Mr. Hanged Man even lost his composure… Audrey looked away with a longing expression and said to The Sun who was diagonally opposite her, "Mr. Sun, I remember you mentioning that the City of Silver has the Dragon pathway's Sequence 9, 8, and 7 potion formulas?"

"Yes." Derrick nodded honestly. "Sequence 7's potion formula is Psyche Analyst."

"If I wish to get it, what is the price I need to pay?" Audrey asked in a reserved manner.

"The Sequence 7 potion formula of the Sun pathway," Derrick replied without any hesitation.

Audrey nodded gently and said, "I'll do my best to obtain it."

Hmm… Xio and Fors mentioned before that there's a Beyonder of the Sun pathway at Mr. A's gathering. He's at least Sequence 7 and is adept at purification and exorcism. Once all the recent events settle down, I can attempt to get it from him… In addition, I should join more of the gatherings at the abandoned education building in that hospital. I should try to come into contact with members of the Psychology Alchemists… One of the two paths will definitely lead to something… Thoughts flashed through Audrey's mind, but she suddenly realized that she was unable to obtain it even if she discovered clues to the formula.

This was because she would be experiencing a financial crisis for the next few months and was barely holding on.

The price of a Sequence 7 formula is around 800 pounds, so if I scrimp, I should be able to produce that. Hmm… It's already October, it's almost new year's. I'll be an adult then, and I'll have the freedom to handle a lot more of my money… Or should I use the knowledge I was taught by Mr. Fool to trade? I wonder what attitude "He" has towards this kind of behavior… Audrey's thoughts gradually dispersed.

She decided to wait until there was hope for the formula before she asked Mr. Fool.

The transaction segment came to an end. Klein originally wanted to use the knowledge he knew to exchange for a mystical item without many negative effects, but after sensing how tight The Hanged Man was, he knew that the other party would pay a large price for those two Beyonder ingredients. It was unlikely that he had any extra assets, so he could only give up in regret.

As soon as the free exchange segment began, Alger took the initiative to mention, "Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos's ship and crew was subdued,

giving rise to a new pirate admiral."

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CHAPTER 292
EXCHANGING NEWS

Audrey was interested in the pirate admiral and asked, "What's his name? What was his current title? There hasn't been any related news in Backlund."

Alger nodded slowly.

"She's a lady and was a famous pirate in the past. You should've heard of Ailment Girl Tracy, right?"

"No, I don't know much about such things." Audrey shook her head in honesty.

Me too… Sitting at the end of the table, Klein added inwardly.

Alger fell silent for two seconds, and without wasting any time explaining, he said, "In short, she subdued the crew of Qilangos's crew last month. She proved herself with actual action that she had the strength of a pirate admiral. She changed the name of Qilangos's ship to Black Death and calls herself Rear Admiral Ailment.

"In the past, she acted independently and was someone who specialized in curses, black flames, and ice. Her enemies would always suffer from sudden ailments of various kinds. At present, no one knows which pathway she belongs to, but they're certain that she's at Sequence 5."

Audrey listened with relish. She blinked her eyes and requested curiously, "Mr. Hanged Man, can you introduce the four pirate kings and the other six

pirate admirals in detail? I've only heard of their names and titles, but I don't know what Beyonder powers they are equipped with."

Alger looked around and saw that both The Sun and The World were showing signs of attentiveness. He nodded slightly and said, "That wouldn't be an issue."

"The strongest pirate king is the King of the Five Seas, Nast. He claims to be a descendant of the Fourth Epoch's Solomon Empire. Not only is he a High-Sequence Beyonder, but he possesses the terrifying ghost ship 'Dark Emperor,' a relic of the empire. He's adept at using 'order.' He can pull his enemy into combat, in a domain that he's best at, and create fascinating effects…

"He's also the oldest pirate in the world. Rumor has it that he's over a hundred years old, and he has been active in the Five Seas since the Roselle era. No one knows exactly how old he is.

"Of course, compared to the other pirate kings, there's a lot of information about him. As for the owner of Dawn, all we know is that she's a beautiful woman. She was once a Warlock and is now a demigod. She calls herself 'Queen Mystery.'"

…

After introducing the "four kings," Alger changed the topic to the six remaining pirate admirals.

"The owner of the Black Tulip, Ludwell, was once a subordinate of the King of the Five Seas. Later, he became independent and calls himself 'Admiral Hell.' Rumor has it that he's established certain connections with the Numinous Episcopate. He's a powerful medium and can control all sorts of creatures in the spirit world. He's terrifying and odd. Rumor has it that he possesses a ring left behind from the ancient era's 'Death.'

"Admiral of Stars Cattleya was once a follower of Queen Mystery, but they've long become estranged. The reason for that, according to rumors, is because she joined a particular secret organization, angering Queen Mystery. And according to the information I know, this secret organization is the Moses Ascetic Order."

The Moses Ascetic Order… The Mystery Pryer pathway… The Hidden Sage… Klein suddenly thought of old Neil's loss of control and the evil god who would whisper temptations into the ears of Low-Sequence Beyonders of the same Sequence.

This was the first time he learned news regarding the Moses Ascetic Order through reality instead of books!

Then, Alger introduced Admiral of Blood Senor, who was suspected to be nonhuman; Rear Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine, who possessed a bloodline that was partially from sea monsters; Rear Admiral Iceberg Edwina Edwards, and Rear Admiral Dusk Bulatov Ioan.

"Thank you so much for sharing. I'm beginning to yearn for the sea," Audrey said, filled with longing. "I don't know when I'll be able to truly travel."

"No, Miss Justice, it's absolutely not as nice as you imagine. From my point of view, it's an amalgamation of blood, chaos, murder, desire, and horror," Alger calmly doused her enthusiasm.

Audrey nodded and switched topics.

"There have been 11 serial murders in Backlund recently, but one of them has been proven to be a copycat crime. The serial killings are against women who were street girls but are now working normal professions. The murderer cuts open their stomachs and removes all of their internal organs."

"This sounds like something to do with devil worship. Was it done by someone from the Blood Sanctify Sect?" Alger instantly made a guess.

"I don't know. The murderer hasn't been found yet." Audrey yearned to become a detective, bringing Susie along and capturing that cursed murderer.

At this moment, Derrick blurted out in a daze, "I know about such rituals."

He knows? That's right. Before the cataclysm, especially during the Second Epoch, devils were active in the real world where they lived on the ground. They were the object of hatred for both giants and dragons. It's normal for the City of Silver to have relevant records… Their history hasn't been tampered with, nor has there been any blanks over the generations… Klein looked thoughtfully at The Sun, waiting for him to say more.

"You know about this?" Audrey asked in joy.

Derrick nodded.

"It's mentioned in our Devil Studies. It's rather ancient. The Devils use it as a ritual to supplement their advancement, typically used when advancing from Sequence 6 to Sequence 5."

"It's not a ceremony to please the devil, but a ceremony for the devil to assist them in advancing?" Audrey asked in surprise.

Derrick replied very seriously, "That's right. The Abyss pathway's Sequence 6 is called Devil. This is also the origin of that race's name."

The Abyss pathway? Before the cataclysm, the Devil pathway was called the Abyss pathway, and Devil is only the name of Sequence 6… Could… Sequence 0 be Abyss? Again, Klein discovered the value of The Sun.

A lot of knowledge and mysteries were lost across the river of history, but the City of Silver still possessed them!

"Is that so…" Audrey nodded indiscernibly. "Mr. Sun, are you aware of the actual details of the ritual?"

Derrick nodded and said, "The minimum requirement is 13 and the highest is 49. The more complete the ritual, the higher the chance of advancement.

"Between two murders, there must be a minimum of three days. Otherwise, it would be easy to lose control, but the interval will also not exceed nine days. That will cause the ritual to be reset.

"Every time a murder occurs and after every partial ritual, the Devil will eat the victim's organs. From this point on, he'll be in a violent and bloodthirsty state, wishing to harm others until that desire is satisfied once again."

"That's really scary…" Audrey sighed from the bottom of her heart, feeling that she couldn't even bear to imagine it.

Klein sat in the thick gray fog, quietly listening and remembering.

After discussing the case of the serial killer, Audrey looked at Alger and organized her words.

"Mr. Hanged Man, there's something that I've been wondering about.

"I've attended several Beyonder gatherings and find that very few people sell potion formulas. Even if there is one, it would be very difficult for the transaction to close. Why is this?"

Alger chuckled and said, "That's because a potion formula is easy to fake, and Beyonder gatherings are relatively hidden and not too binding. Therefore, no one dares to risk their lives. Are you going to prepare two sets of Beyonder ingredients and conduct an experiment with animals first? That price is too high."

"…" Audrey suddenly felt a little guilty.

"Moreover, that's not the only extra cost. Animals can lose control more easily than humans after taking potions. You have to hire a few Beyonders to protect you to prevent you from dying during your experiments. So, for

most Beyonders, even if a formula appears, they wouldn't dare buy it," Alger added.

"…" Audrey felt even guiltier.

Alger didn't notice her reaction and continued, "Because of this, unless the host or a member of the gathering has the ability to appraise the authenticity of the potion formula and has already won the trust of most members, it's difficult for a formula trade to close."

Well, the Old Mister Eye of Wisdom can… Mr. A is a Shepherd, so he should be able to… Klein leaned back in his chair and muttered something to himself in silence.

A thought flashed through Audrey's mind as she asked, "Can't it be done by making an oath?"

"Honorable Lady, this is an underground gathering. Do you think it's suitable to make an oath in the name of one of the seven orthodox gods? This isn't something that can be resolved with an oath. A corresponding ritual is needed." Alger chuckled. "As for other evil gods or devils and mysterious existences like the Hidden Sage and the True Creator, unless you're 'Their' believers, who would dare to swear an oath in 'Their' name? Wouldn't they be wishing death upon themselves?"

At this point, he sighed.

"In addition, without them knowing the acting method, potions easily lead to a loss of control, easily turning people into monsters. Furthermore, the corresponding ingredients are hard to obtain and rather expensive. Therefore, as long as the seven Churches don't allow such trades to be officially recognized, there's no need for them to deliberately control the spread of potion formulas on a wide scale, much less talk about advancement."

"So that's how it is…" Audrey murmured to herself, clearing a huge question in her mind.

No wonder… Klein suddenly came to a realization.

Seven orthodox gods? Derrick really wanted to ask which seven they were, but he ultimately held himself back.

He thought for a moment and said, "The City of Silver has recently organized an expedition to explore deep into the darkness and found a semi-destroyed temple. The statue that's worshipped inside was a naked man nailed upside down on a cross. There were also a lot of bloodstains on its surface.

"Do you know which god that is?"

This is… the True Creator! The Forsaken Land of the Gods actually has a temple of the True Creator! Judging from what The Sun said, the True Creator shouldn't exist before the cataclysm; otherwise, it would be impossible for the City of Silver to not recognize it! Klein used his Clown ability to control his expression to prevent the shock from showing on his face.

Justice, The Hanged Man, and The World exchanged looks, shook their heads, and said in unison, "We don't know."

Just as they finished speaking, they heard Mr. Fool in the gray fog say in a deep voice, "That's the Fallen Creator."

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CHAPTER 293
DERRICK'S WORRY

The Fallen Creator? Derrick frowned immediately.

The residents of the City of Silver had always believed in the "omnipotent and omniscient God, the Lord that created everything"; therefore, when he heard a similar name with the word "fallen" tagged to it, he couldn't help but instinctively reject and feel uncomfortable about the notion.

Fallen Creator… That's the way Mr. Fool addresses the True Creator… So that's the image of this evil god… But why would his statue and temple appear within the City of Silver's exploration confines? That place is suspected to be the Forsaken Land of the Gods! Or perhaps, before it was abandoned by the gods, there was already the faith of the True Creator… Could the holy residence that the Aurora Order always talks about be the Forsaken Land of the Gods? Many thoughts came to Alger, but he couldn't make an accurate judgment because the history before the Cataclysm had long evolved into myths and legends. It couldn't simply be described as information shrouded in fog.

He thought for two seconds and deliberately said, "We have another name for the Fallen Creator. It's the True Creator.

"The faction that believes in 'Him' is in control of the Beyonder pathways such as the Secrets Suppliant, Listener, and Shadow Ascetic. The subsequent Sequence includes the Shepherd you mentioned before."

Shepherd? The silent Derrick sat up straight, his eyes filled with horror.

He wasn't unfamiliar with the Beyonder pathways which The Hanged Man had referred to, other than some of the Sequences being described with similar words in the City of Silver. For instance, The Whispered and Listener.

*So that strange and evil statue represents the Secrets Suppliant pathway… Elder Lovia is already a Shepherd… She's been acting more and more strangely… *Derrick suddenly started to worry about the six-member council's newly advanced elder and the safety of the City of Silver.

In the past, when they explored the surrounding areas, the City of Silver had found a few cities that were completely destroyed. In those places, only a few pieces of rubble had been carved with words that proved the existence of such a civilization.

These words were all variations of Dragonese, Jotun, and Elvish and most of them repetitively described one kind of existence.

That existence was called: "Evil god!"

The residents of the City of Silver who was involved in the expedition were guessing that those cities were destroyed by evil gods. So, after finding out that Elder Lovia's pathway was probably controlled by an evil god, how could Derrick not be shocked, worried, and terrified?

He returned to his taciturn state, disappointing Audrey who had been waiting to hear more stories about the City of Silver.

After so many gatherings, after her purchase of the dragon race's intelligence, her interest towards the City of Silver had grown even more.

His reaction is a little different from what I expected… Alger observed calmly for a while, but he failed to gain anything from it.

For a moment, he couldn't find a point of entry into the conversation. And if he asked directly, he suspected that The Sun would request payment which

wasn't an easy task for him since he was burdened with the debt of two Beyonder ingredients.

It was at this moment that they simultaneously heard the sound of the table being tapped gently.

Klein concealed his fatigue with the thick gray fog and said with a chuckle, "Let's end today's gathering here."

"Your will is our will." Audrey immediately stood up and curtsied with her illusory skirt. The Hanged Man, The Sun, and The World successively replied with similar words.

Klein waved his hand and severed the connection, quietly watching the blurry shadows of Miss Justice and the others disappear into thin air.

Then, he made his smurf, The World, disappear. Then, he picked up the small badge which he had obtained from Lanevus and studied it.

"You can join if you have this item." Klein read the sentence on the back of the badge but realized that it didn't undergo any changes.

He thought for a moment and carefully injected spirituality into it.

A layer of faint light bloomed and quickly condensed into a light beam, shooting out of the gray fog.

However, it was repelled by the endless gray fog.

The beam of light suddenly dispersed, transforming into a palm-sized piece of illusory goatskin parchment. On it was written in ancient Feysac: "January 4, 1350, 8 p.m. in Babur Valley."

A simple communication device in the field of mysticism? It sends out messages, requests synchronization, and gets the latest rendezvous time and

venue? Klein recalled the scene he had just seen and made a preliminary judgment on the use of the badge.

1350, that's next year… The Babur Valley lies in the area before the Tussock River enters Backlund… The time is precise, but the venue is vague. It's a valley that's almost a hundred kilometers long… Perhaps, this badge can be used as a location tool when one gets there… Klein turned the badge over and over, with interest, trying to figure out the corresponding symbols, incantations, and characteristics, to see if he could copy one himself.

Unfortunately, since he was no longer part of the Nighthawks, his knowledge in mysticism was still at the same level as before. He had no opportunities of improving it further.

Therefore, after studying it for a few minutes, he could only helplessly give up.

As for the phrase "you can join if you have this item," Klein's plan was to not consider it for the time being.

If I can become a Faceless by the end of this year, then I can head there in disguise. Otherwise, forget it… Klein silently said to himself, then he turned his attention to the matter of advancing to Magician.

The true root and juice of the Mist Treant is likely "in the bag" with The Sun… If my luck isn't too bad, I should be able to get the spinal fluid of a Dark Patterned Black Panther this week. Sequence 7, a Mid-Sequence. I can already see and touch it… Hmm… How should a Magician act? As he thought about it, Klein began to consider specific issues.

Due to his experiences before and after his death and resurrection, he instantly comprehended the true essence of Clown. Therefore, in this month or so, he only needed constant acting in his daily life to gradually digest it. He didn't need to make further summaries and adjust it according to the feedback. After killing Lanevus and attaining his initial revenge, the Clown potion was completely digested the moment he was laughing amid tears.

This wasn't the same as the process in which Klein first digested the Seer potion. It was considered a special case, and now he had to return to such a situation with the Magician's acting.

The true essence of Magician, to pass off the illusory with the genuine? Hmm, according to what Zaratul said in the Emperor's diary, although the main focus of this pathway isn't fate, a portion of it still belongs to it. So, there must be something corresponding to it? For example, it might seem that fate can be changed to a certain extent, but in the end, it turns out to all be an illusion. It's just a magic trick that fools you? Klein rubbed his temples, then wrapped his remnant spirituality around himself and descended into the gray fog.

…

St. George's Borough, in a two-bedroom apartment.

"Fortunately, I prepared another place like this. Otherwise, I wouldn't even know where to hide." Fors stared into the mirror and removed her dropping hair.

"That's right…" Xio replied weakly, lying in bed.

"I just read in the newspaper that Lanevus is dead, but this matter involves godhood, so it won't end so soon. We have to hide for a while. Uh, no, it's you who's going to hide, not me. I'm an upright clinical doctor, the author of a bestseller!" Fors looked at herself in the mirror and began putting on simple make-up.

Xio couldn't provide a rebuttal as she slowly sat up and said, "Thankfully I was sufficiently clever and possess rich experience. When I got someone to make the report, I didn't directly say that it involved the godhood of the True Creator. I only described it as seemingly very dangerous and that the target had experienced huge changes like he was praying to evil gods. If not, I wouldn't even dare to stay in Backlund. To be embroiled in high-level

battles sure is troublesome and dangerous. I don't want to take on any more of Miss Audrey's missions again!"

"Really?" Fors asked without looking back.

"Uh…" Xio fell silent for a few seconds and said, "Actually, there was no need for us to mention the godhood. Since Miss Audrey was able to discover this on her side, the Church of the Goddess would definitely be capable of doing so… They've most likely killed 'Giant,' right?"

"I can't be sure," Fors replied without mincing her words.

Xio froze, then let out a long, slow sigh.

Fors stopped what she was doing, turned her head to look at her, and said, "This mission was basically completed by you, so I won't be sharing the payment with you. There's a total of 200 pounds, so with the 70 pounds you've saved up, even if you deduct the expenses, you should be close to obtaining the first Beyonder ingredient for the Sheriff potion!"

"But I wouldn't be able to receive the 100 pounds from the police so quickly." Xio pursed her lips.

This wasn't to say that the police wasn't willing to give the bounty money, but that she couldn't take it directly. She had to go through the friend who had helped her deliver the clues—that was the official bounty recipient.

Since she believed that this matter would definitely cause a huge ruckus, she didn't have the guts to find her friend any time soon.

As for whether that friend would usurp the bounty, she was quite confident. The other party had helped too many shady bounty hunters before. It was fine to take a commission, but if he dared to directly usurp all of the bounty money, he would've already died in some unknown dark alley.

"But it will ultimately belong to you." Fors paused for two seconds and seriously asked, "When you've collected enough money, will you contact the masked guy and work for him so that you can purchase the corresponding ingredients from him?"

"No, unless I can't get it anywhere else and that there's no hope." Xio gave her answer.

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Count Hall.

Audrey was still reminiscing over today's gathering when she suddenly saw her personal maid, Annie, coming over with a piece of paper.

"Miss, here's your telegram." Annie smiled and said, "It's from the east coast of Balam."

Alfred's? Audrey happily received it and read it carefully.

"Dear sister, the Rainbow Salamander that you asked for has arrived at Pritz Harbor last night. My orders are to deliver it to your manor in the suburbs."

Arrived last night? Then it'll be delivered to my manor as early as today and by the latest, tomorrow… Audrey tilted her head to the side and looked at Susie, who was fighting with her snacks. With a shallow smile, she said, "Susie, the gift I prepared for you is almost here."

"Woof?" Susie looked at her mistress in confusion.

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CHAPTER 294
ADMIRAL OF STARS

Ring! Ring!

Klein circled the lawn behind Leppard's house a few times on the bicycle the inventor had just completed.

"It's not bad, it's just as I expected, but there's no need to make a lone-standing bell. The cyclist won't be able to free a hand when they encounter a situation. You can combine the bell to the handle. This will make it simpler and more adequate for situational developments." Klein's right hand clasped the brake tight, slowing the bike down to a stop.

Meanwhile, he placed the bell in his left hand back to its original spot.

Leppard thought for a moment.

"Yes, that's right. I was simply imitating the ringing bells of the carriages and forgot that this is a brand new mode of transportation."

At this point, he looked at Klein, who was getting off the bike with great familiarity, as he placed it on a rack.

"You give me the feeling that you've ridden a similar type of transportation tool before, and you rode it very well… I'm sure all the other bikes on the market are very flawed and very different from my bike."

Sir, do you have time to learn more about bicycle-sharing systems… As a Clown, I should actually be able to ride a unicycle… Klein silently lampooned before smiling.

"This has nothing to do with experience, the key is outstanding balance and exercise."

He quickly changed the subject. "But based on your introduction just now, the production cost is quite high, and it's quite at odds with our product's market segment. You have to come up with a plan as soon as possible to reduce the cost, and you have to understand that nobles, magnates, and other people of the high-classes of society will definitely not choose to ride their own bicycles. It would be disgraceful, and the same goes for the middle class with an annual income of 300 pounds or higher.

"Our target audience are clerks, postmen, so-called working-class aristocrats, and people who earn between seventy to three hundred pounds a year."

"This is just a prototype, yea—a term invented by Emperor Roselle. It's normal to have a high cost. If the subsequent industrialization is successful, I believe it wouldn't be a problem to lower it to 6 pounds. If we can find a cheap replacement material for natural rubber, it'll be even better. That's the most expensive component," Leppard had long considered this problem as he replied.

Unfortunately, no crude oil has been found in this world yet… I wonder if it actually exists or not… Can refined coal tar be a replacement in this aspect? I don't know about this at all, I'm neither a student of this profession nor a Savant… Klein thought for a moment and said, "If the cost can be kept below four pounds, we'll be rich. As for the cheap material used to replace natural rubber, you can go through Roselle's manuscript. Maybe he has some ideas."

"Yea," Leppard said before he suddenly added, "speaking of which, I just remembered that there will be an Emperor Roselle Memorial Exhibition at the Royal Museum next week! It's organized by the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. Rumor has it that there will be the original blueprints of Emperor Roselle's inventions and all kinds of relics. "

The original invention blueprints and all kinds of relics? Klein's heart skipped a beat and pressed, "When is it exactly? I'm very interested."

"From next Tuesday to next Friday, every day from nine in the morning to six in the afternoon. Although Emperor Roselle was once the enemy of the kingdom, the allure of his legendary life hasn't declined because of this."

"I'll take some time out of my schedule to visit the exhibition." Klein fished out his bulging wallet and took out two ten-pound and two five-pound notes. "Here's the second payment. Use it to study how to cut costs and make the most perfect application at the Patent Office. If you don't have a lawyer you know, I can introduce one, and the last twenty pounds will be given to you next week to find new investors and complete the industrialization of the product. Of course, I'll also help you get in touch with people who are interested."

He had never thought of monopolizing the profits of a bicycle. First, he lacked the money for mass production, and second, he believed that he lacked the social connections needed for industrialization, promotion, and sales. He could barely do it himself or hire people to do it. It was hard work with no guarantee of success. It was even possible that he might make a loss. In that case, it would be better to bring in new investors with relevant resources and channels and let the professionals handle the professional work.

More importantly, he would then have the opportunity to cash out a certain amount of shares in advance, accumulating the resources and cash that he needed to advance to Faceless. He wanted to avoid running into a situation where he encountered the ingredients but lacked the money to buy them.

Besides, I have no intention to be a bicycle tycoon. My identity is sensitive. I should stay away from things that might draw society's attention towards me before I become a Faceless. I'm acting as a Magician, not a businessman or a factory owner… Klein sighed in his heart.

"I know several lawyers," Leppard muttered and received the second round of investment funds. "Why don't you go to the bank and apply for a loan? When we get the patent, I'm sure that a bank will loan us money, like the Backlund Bank or Varvat Bank."

"We're not just bringing in investors, but resourceful channels, connections, and skills; do you understand?" Klein explained with a smile. He then put on his hat and said, "When you've applied for a patent, send me a letter. You know my address."

…

On the Sonia Sea stood an island with an extinct volcano.

One by one, ships with masts and sails approached the shore, crowding up the reasonably sizable wharf.

The sound of the pirates singing, shouting, laughing, cursing, and cheering filled the air, turning the place into a sea of revelry.

The Hanged Man, Alger Wilson, stepped off the Blue Avenger and climbed a cliff not far away and watched all of this in silence.

With the exception of the Four Kings and the Seven Pirate Admirals, the rest of the pirates only received the news of the event a week ago. Most of them won't be able to arrive in time as this will prevent the navies of the different countries and the powerful Beyonders from the various Churches to launch an assault. Alger watched the pirates carrying out buckets of ale without his attention on them.

He knew that the Loen Kingdom already had a new generation of ironclad warships, but he wasn't worried about meeting one here. This was because only four months had passed, and the advertised invincible fleet still needed more ironclad warships, and different types of ships for support, as well as the time to train military officers, sailors, and gunners. There was no way they could create a combat force without a year's time.

Even as Alger's thoughts drifted away, the pirates on the ships and wharf suddenly cried out in alarm. Some ran deep into the islands, some hurriedly steered their ships away from the wharf, as if they were running from devils and the plague.

In just a few minutes, the bustling scene from before was reduced to a desolate mess and silence.

Alger turned his head to look at the sea and saw a ship painted black with a huge white flag with a skull hanging from its mast.

The skull was pitch black, and its eye sockets burned with a ghostly blue flame.

Black Death… Alger whispered.

He understood why the pirates had scurried off.

Wherever Rear Admiral Ailment Tracy passed, she would leave a wake of people who got sick for no reason!

Black Death approached the shore slowly as a figure wearing a white linen shirt and dark red coat appeared at the ship's bow.

The figure was quite a beautiful lady, and she also exuded a heroic vibe.

Her beautiful black hair was coiled up high, and she had a white scarf wrapped around her head. She wore beige pants and had a tall and slender figure, and it had no lack of elegance.

What attracted the most attention was the woman's long, straight eyebrows and the sharp, bright blue eyes.

As she looked around, her eyes would occasionally lose focus, making her look adrift and exceptionally alluring.

A wandering poet who had mixed himself with the pirates had arrived at the edge of the cliff at some point. He began reciting.

"She will always be a girl.

"She indeed brings ailments. Oh, I'm sick. My mind is full of her."

A number of pirates who left, gathered once again as they looked at Ailment Maiden Tracy, mesmerized.

Alger held back his feelings of contempt as he glanced at the pirates and scoffed inwardly.

Truly a bunch of fellows with no future or will. All they knew was hide moments ago, but now, they've become seduced by her beauty.

Although Ailment Maiden is indeed very beautiful, it's not to the extent that it will cause them to act this way. Oh… A Beyonder power related to allurement?

As his mind was whirling, Rear Admiral Ailment Tracy left Black Death and began walking to the black palace deep within the island.

At that moment, a huge sailboat appeared on the sea. Its flag depicted an eyelash-less eye with ten stars surrounding it.

Admiral of Stars Cattleya… Alger nodded gently and muttered silently.

Since the Black Death and the other ships were already docked at the wharf, the huge ship didn't approach the shore. Instead, it went around to the sheltered cliff and anchored.

Soon after, the gloomy sky suddenly lit up, and bits of stellar radiance sprinkled down, condensing in the air to form a transparent long bridge. It led from the giant sailboat to the palace.

A woman stepped onto the long bridge and began strolling through the air.

She wore a black, classical robe with numerous symbols and magic characteristics inscribed on it. The most obvious one was a mysterious eye with no eyelashes.

Hanging on this woman's waist, there was a celestial globe and a short scepter. She resembled powerful warlocks who were active in the Fourth Epoch according to folklore.

Alger looked up and frowned slightly as he muttered in puzzlement, *That celestial globe looks familiar…*

It's like, it's like… the strange glass bottle I previously obtained, the one I had no idea how to use. It eventually shattered after Mr. Fool pulled me into the Gathering…

…

On the outskirts of Empress Borough, Audrey led her maids and the huge golden retriever, Susie, into her own manor.

"Miss, the delivery from Enmat Harbor is just ahead," the butler in charge of the manor said in a respectful tone.

"Alright." Audrey nodded lightly and said half-jokingly to the large golden retriever beside her, "Susie, this is your present."

As they spoke, they turned a corner and saw the so-called gift.

It was a giant lizard whose skin changed color depending on how the light hit it. It was three meters long, and its height reached Audrey's knees even with it laying on the ground.

They were two colossal creatures, enormous enough to frighten a child!

"Woof?" She turned her head to look at her mistress and saw that her expression was exactly the same as hers. Apparently, she hadn't expected the gift to be so exaggerated.

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CHAPTER 295
ALL INGREDIENTS GATHERED

Audrey had always had a subconscious understanding that a Rainbow Salamander = the Rainbow Salamander's pituitary gland = the size of one's palm. To her, it would be something soft with grooves, a Beyonder ingredient which constantly changed in color.

So, what did that have to do with the three-meter-long colossus in front of her?

For a moment she was confused, but when she heard Susie's yelp, she snapped to her senses. She pretended to be satisfied with the result and said to the butler, "This is exactly the animal specimen I need.

"Um… It's just a little bigger than I thought, just a little.

"Take the servants and move them to the warehouse. I'll study it when I'm free."

"Yes, Miss!" Then, the butler immediately instructed the nearby male servants who were furtively looking at their mistress.

Audrey looked around and, without another word, led Susie into the manor's study. Using the excuse that she had to focus on writing a return letter to her brother, she made all the maids she had brought stay outside.

After the dissection is done, there will be two sets of Rainbow Salamander pituitary glands… A portion can be used to exchange for a Farsman Rabbit, just enough to concoct a bottle of the Telepathist potion… Audrey gradually

recovered from her astonishment and confusion as she began to think about Susie's advancement.

At that moment, she thought of a serious problem.

She had no idea if Susie had digested the potion or not!

If it hasn't been completely digested, consuming the Telepathist potion would easily lead to a loss of control… She isn't like a human who can endure through it. Wait, how did she endure it the first time!? Besides, her current intelligence is about that of a ten-year-old child's. S-she's already learning words in the Loen language, and she said she wishes to read newspapers and magazines, as well as books… Audrey fell silent for a few seconds. She glanced at the confused, large golden retriever that sat beside her.

"Susie, have you completely digested the potion?"

"Digest?" Susie returned with clear articulation, expressing her puzzlement.

Audrey had already told her that what she had taken was a potion, and she had warned her not to tell anyone, and not to tell any intelligent animals that could bark or meow.

Audrey nodded her head slowly and heavily.

"It's a very strange and unique feeling. It feels like something illusory inside your body breaks down and fuses with your mind. You will vaguely see illusory stars one after another, and you will be one of them. These stars will attract each other, in a bid to fuse as one."

Susie quietly listened to everything, then replied with a light and brisk voice, "Then I should have completely digested it. I've had a similar feeling before."

Ah? Susie has completely digested the Spectator potion? B-but no one taught her the acting method! At most, I would occasionally remind her to observe more and remain calm… Audrey asked in astonishment, "When did you digest it?"

"Last month, the month before last, or perhaps even earlier…" Susie tried her best to recall when. Seeing that her mistress's expression was getting odder and odder, she hurriedly wagged her tail and timidly added, "I don't remember… I'm just a dog. I won't purposely remember such things. Woof."

*Just a dog… But you were only a little slower at digesting than me… Don't tell me that when I interact with other Beyonders, I'll say that when it comes to digesting potions, I'm a little better than a dog… Pui! Audrey, what are you thinking! *Audrey maintained her elegant smile and politely praised, "Very good, I mean, on this matter regarding the digestion of the potion, you did very well."

…

Returning from Leppard's place, Klein took a leisurely afternoon nap.

But it wasn't long before he was awakened by illusory, disconcerting cries.

Male? Is it Mr. Hanged Man or Little Sun? Is one of the final main ingredients for my potion ready? Klein carefully tried distinguishing who for a few seconds and soon, forgot about his anger from being awakened. He quickly got up, took four steps counterclockwise, and went above the gray fog.

He noticed that the crimson star that symbolized The Hanged Man was contracting and expanding. Hence, he stretched out his hand, spreading his spirituality before touching it.

After the usual honorary names of The Fool, The Hanged Man prayed, "… I've already gathered the Dark Patterned Black Panther Spinal Fluid and the

Spring of the Elves Marrow Crystals. Please permit me to hold a sacrificial ritual and seek your help in handing it to Mr. World."

That's pretty fast… The Hanged Man had said that there would be a grand event among the pirates soon. It seems like it's not soon, but now… He always holds back when speaking, never fully speaking the truth… Klein nodded indiscernibly and said, "Sure."

After a simple sacrificial ritual, Alger resisted his urge to ask Mr. Fool if the celestial globe on Admiral of Stars Cattleya had anything to do with "Him."

At this moment, Klein had already forgotten about him and was admiring the two Beyonder ingredients on the surface of the long bronze table.

The Dark Patterned Black Panther Spinal Fluid was a seemingly translucent liquid, but if one looked carefully, they would discover that its clarity was also divided into different levels. The lower one went, the more transparent they were at distinct levels. It fully satisfied someone with an obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The Spring of the Elves Marrow Crystals was similar to a faded egg. Its shell was very thin, and it looked like it could easily shatter at a touch. Even without shaking, one could still hear the sound of swishing water inside.

I should be able to get 300 pounds and a formula clue… My Magician is only short of the true root and juice of the Mist Treant. I wonder when Little Sun will complete the mission… Klein waited in anticipation.

As for the other supplementary ingredients, he had already bought them at various stores. For example, the Droplet Gem he needed to buy was purchased from a jewelry store and he had ground it into powder. 5 grams was about 2.5 pounds.

The Sun, Derrick, didn't keep Klein waiting long, and on Wednesday evening, he whispered a prayer to The Fool that he had prepared the true

root and juice of the Mist Treant and asked him to pass them on to The World.

The Mist Treant's true root was heart-shaped, brown, palm-sized, and wrinkled. It looked like an old man's skin, but its back was as smooth and exquisite as a gem. It was slightly expanding and contracting, as though it had a certain amount of vitality.

Its juice was light green and sparkling, making it look very delicious.

Klein just looked at them, feeling a little smug.

In the present day and age, Sequence 7 was the threshold of a Mid-Sequence Beyonder.

This meant that a Beyonder would finally be able to bid farewell to the state of being only slightly stronger than ordinary people in certain aspects. They would be able to wield a relative abundance of Beyonder powers!

Phew… Klein slowly exhaled, returned to his bedroom, and summoned himself to bring the Beyonder ingredients into the real world.

He didn't prepare any additional vessels. He washed an iron pot in the kitchen a few times and began to concoct the potion according to the steps of handling the supplementary ingredients before handling the main ingredients.

With the Clown's ability at controlling his body, he quickly finished the first stage, and one by one, he put in the Dark Patterned Black Panther's spinal fluid and the Mist Treant's true root.

Sizzle!

With a jarring sound, a pale white fog suddenly rose and was forcefully pulled back into the pot by an invisible force.

When everything calmed down, Klein quickly poured every drop of liquid into a transparent bottle that he had prepared.

That liquid was rather special. It was as if fireworks were constantly being released from within it. Red, orange, yellow, green, and other colors constantly scattered, disappeared, and then reappeared again.

This was the Magician potion!

Klein stuck a coin worth 1 pound between his thumb and index finger of his left hand, flicked it up, and opened his palm to catch it.

He was using divination to confirm if the potion he concocted had succeeded!

Pa!

The gold coin fell, its portrait faced up, indicating a positive response!

Without any hesitation, Klein put away the gold coin, picked up the potion, and walked out of the kitchen.

At that moment, the sky was already dark. The gas lamps in the room hadn't been lit up yet, causing the surroundings to be in complete darkness. Only the light near the oriel window created a gloomy scene.

Klein sat down on the sofa and began Cogitation to calm his stirring heart and dispel all of his emotions temporarily from his body.

After doing all of this, he raised the glass bottle, tipped his head, and drank the Magician potion.

Gulp! Gulp!

The ice-cold potion went down his throat, and at every moment, it felt like countless bubbles were bursting.

Klein's entire body was experiencing this stimulation, and massive amounts of information flooded his mind, blooming into fireworks.

The veins on his forehead bulged, and his head felt like it was about to burst!

However, this wasn't a very difficult situation for Klein to endure. The terrifying ravings before entering the gray fog and the evil roars of the True Creator were much more terrifying.

"Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea…”

The ethereal temptation echoed again. Klein's head expanded and contracted repeatedly before he gradually recovered his thoughts. He began to consciously restrain his thoughts, outline the spherical light, and slowly enter a state of Cogitation.

After an unknown period of time, his vision recovered. At the same time, he felt an itch all over his body, with his arms feeling the worst.

Klein rolled up his sleeves and was surprised to see that one of his arms was deeply wrinkled, like a centenarian. The other arm had lost its color and had become translucent. He could directly see his blood vessels, muscles, and veins.

This… Could it be that I had nearly lost control? No, it shouldn't be. This should be the remnant influences… Klein sat on the sofa in the dark, leaning forward as he watched the anomaly in his arms warily, as if it were a breeding ground for monsters.

And all of this had nothing to do with Klein. He sat quietly on the sofa in the darkness, watching his creased skin and the translucent state of his arms slowly recover. Five to six minutes later, Klein silently sighed as everything finally returned to normal.

It's a good thing that no one came knocking on the door or ringing on the bell… I only chose to advance after completely digesting the Sequence 8 potion. With such severe effects, it would be hard for those Beyonders who depended on time to grind through the potion. It really is difficult to pass this stage.

No wonder Captain took nine years…

No wonder Swain, the former Captain of a Mandated Punisher Squad and owner of the Evil Dragon Bar, didn't dare to consume the Sequence 7 potion, Seafarer…

After sitting silently for more than ten seconds, Klein slowly stood up.

At that moment, he was already a Mid-Sequence Beyonder.

At that moment, he was already a Magician.

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CHAPTER 296
MAGICIAN

He took two steps forward and passed the coffee table. Klein stretched his body and shook his wrist, but he found nothing unusual.

He looked at the gas lamps outside the oriel window which illuminated the darkness and gloominess and said to himself thoughtfully, *My hands are more agile and I'm more nimble. Even if I don't have Beyonder powers, as long as I work hard enough, I can become a top magician.*

This was his first impression of his own transformation.

And just like what was recorded in the Nighthawk records, if a potion provided a specific magical power, then the Beyonder would become aware of it after ingesting it. They would grasp the specific details as though the corresponding knowledge would be injected and imprinted into the mind through a mysterious method.

Just now, my head nearly exploded… Klein smiled and shook his head, carefully recalling what he had felt and the corresponding magical spells.

It had to be said that Magician was indeed considered a powerful Sequence 7 with it possessing many miraculous abilities that could all be cast very quickly.

Among them, there were three which Klein valued and liked the most.

The most important one was, Damage Transfer!

As long as he didn't die instantly, as long as his hands could still move, he could transfer the vital wounds to unimportant areas like his arms, turning fatal wounds into minor injuries. This was a very useful Beyonder ability for life-preservation in actual combat.

The only problem is that at Sequence 7, wounds can only be transferred around my body, and there's only one opportunity. Perhaps as my Sequence is raised, the wounds can be transferred to other items or people… It really does feel like magic… Klein imagined the future.

The second spell was Flaming Jump. Within a range of 30 meters, he could phase between a fire spark that he had left behind and the original flame. It was similar to teleportation which seemed to have a uniqueness of gaining help from the spirit world.

Well, it can be used to its fullest when performing magic… Klein mocked himself inwardly with great satisfaction.

More importantly, as he digested the potion and raised his Sequence, the range of Flaming Jump would increase significantly.

The third type of Beyonder spell was the Air Bullets which Klein had seen the suited Clown from the Secret Order use.

The Magician could produce air projectiles with power and speed comparable to that of the bullets fired from a custom revolver just by snapping his fingers or mimicking sounds. Furthermore, the effect would improve along with the digestion of the potion and the raising of his Sequence. Klein suspected that at Sequence 4 or 5. he could create his own cannonball.

This way, I don't need to buy more revolvers and bullets anymore—No, I still need to buy one. There are many matters that don't need me to expose my Beyonder powers. Any problem that can be solved with guns isn't a problem. Klein nodded indiscernibly and began to examine the other spells and spell-like abilities.

The fourth type was Paper Figurine Substitutes. At a critical moment, the magician could temporarily change the paper figurine into him while he swapped places. It was a relatively simple substitute spell that could not only block a fatal blow but also weaken the damage from hexes.

*So this is the use of all the paper figurines that Nimblewright Master Rosago had brought with him… He must feel regret because he was contaminated by the True Creator and didn't have the chance to use a substitute at all… The biggest problem with this spell is the need to prepare the materials beforehand, which means that the paper figurines have to be cut in advance. In the early days of the Fifth Epoch, Beyonders who brought similar items would undoubtedly be regarded as a dark warlock. If it's discovered now, I'll most likely be suspected… *Klein mulled over the uses and limitations of Paper Figurine Substitutes.

The fifth kind of spell-like ability was called Flame Controlling. As the name implied, one could manipulate flames within a range of 30 meters with a simple action. It could also be used to ignite certain items within this range. Once the potion has been completely digested, or when I advance in Sequence, one could summon a swirling flame out of thin air.

The sixth was Illusion Creation. By influencing the surrounding environment, one could create illusions with colors, sounds, and smells that were close to reality, allowing one to pass off the fake as the truth and deceive the enemy.

*This is a specialty of a Magician… *Klein chuckled and walked over to the oriel window as he took in the night scene of the streets with great satisfaction.

The seventh was a fake form of Underwater Breathing. The principle behind it was to create a thin, invisible air pipe which would allow the Magician to breathe freely and seemingly turn into so-called Murlocs.

The problem was that the air pipe had a limited length. At his present stage, Klein could only maintain it at around five meters, which meant that if the

water depth exceeded five meters, he could drown.

Of course, the potion's digestion and Sequence advancement would result in the growth of the air pipe.

The eighth was a spell-like ability, Bone Softening. This helped a Magician break free from handcuffs, ropes, and chests.

It's also a specialty! Klein thought in a good mood.

The ninth was the evolution of the Clown's ability to turn paper into throwing knives, called Drawing Paper As Weapons. Not only could it turn paper into sharp objects, but it could also temporarily turn into weapons such as bats or bricks, etc.

These were the nine main spells or spell-like abilities of a Magician. Although they weren't particularly strong in both the offensive and defensive aspect, nor were they particularly bizarre, they stood out for their variety. They allowed Klein's strength to instantly rise by more than one level, and his life-preservation and means of escape became even better.

Moreover, Magicians had the ability to cast spells at high speeds. This was a sequence of Beyonders who didn't need to chant or inject spirituality. With just a simple action, they could cast a corresponding spell or spell-like ability.

In addition, the potion made Klein attain some tiny tricks, but they weren't very practical.

I can barely be considered quite a good Beyonder… Klein sighed silently.

Just as he was about to go out for a stroll and get another revolver and replenish his bullets at the Bravehearts Bar, the gas lamps outside the oriel window which tainted the crimson moon's moonlight suddenly turned darker and deeper!

Klein looked up in surprise and saw that the dark clouds and mist had dispersed, clearly revealing the red moon which was a little more than a semicircle.

Its outline rapidly turned into a full circle, and in just a few seconds, it had turned into a full moon that was as red as blood!

It had only been two weeks since the last full moon!

According to the normal calendar, according to astronomy, there were still about ten days left until the next full moon!

This is the Blood Moon? Klein's lips moved slightly as he muttered to himself in relief.

In this world, the changes to the room were both regular and irregular.

Ordinarily, it was exactly the same experience Klein had in his previous life; however, there were always a few times every year when it would suddenly become round and dark red, just like blood. Such a situation that had no logic to it. At times, it happened only once a year, and sometimes, four or five times a year.

Neither astronomers nor mystics could explain this phenomenon or come up with a pattern. Therefore, they could only ignore it for the time being as one of the puzzles. They joked that perhaps the Goddess was in a bad mood and that a change in a woman's mood was undoubtedly irregular.

Of course, not knowing the reason and not being able to understand the essence of the phenomenon didn't mean that there was no corresponding conclusion. In mysticism, people called this situation the Blood Moon, believing that it would bring about the rise and eruption of negative emotions, and that it would strengthen the power of the underworld and the spirit world. Even if the dead were summoned, they might still be able to climb out of their graves.

"This is the second time this year, right?" Klein stood by the oriel window, admiring the clear sky, and the disk-like full moon which was red and glistening. He felt he was in a relatively good shape.

…

In an apartment in Cherwood Borough.

Fors Wall, who had participated in a gathering that night, was unable to make it back home to the two-bedroom apartment in St. George Borough. She sat cross-legged on a sofa in the living room, chewing on a new type of bread which had meat and vegetables in it. She had let down her hair as she thought over the plot of her next novel.

Suddenly, she frowned and threw away the food and pen in her hand.

The moonlight outside the window grew stronger and redder, and the look on Fors's face became more and more painful.

Every full moon, she would hear those ravings that would drive her mad!

Bam!

She fell off the couch, her body writhing as she struggled.

After a while, she pulled out a clump of her hair, but the pain did nothing to ease the explosive sensation in her head or to calm the urge to end her life with a knife.

"Here it comes again…" Fors muttered in pain as her legs were stretched taut from the spasms of pain.

She chanted the name of the god she believed in with great difficulty, seeking redemption.

"Great God of Steam and Machinery…

"You are essential, the Embodiment of…

"You are an artisan, a protector…

"You are the glory of technology, glory…”

As she repeatedly chanted, Fors's suffering didn't abate, and instead it grew more intense.

Bam!

She tumbled around violently, toppling the coffee table and sweeping the books on it to the ground.

Unable to endure it any further, Fors frantically used her nails to scratch the wooden leg of the coffee table, creating one deep scratch after another along with jarring screeching sounds.

Pa!

Her fingernails broke!

Her hair was growing abnormally long!

At that moment, she felt that she would lose control that very night and become a monster. She had already chanted the honorable names of several gods, but she had failed to receive any reprieve.

"I'm going to die… I'm going to die…” As she writhed and rolled about, she suddenly saw a piece of paper with the words in ancient Hermes written on it.

It was the mysterious incantation Xio had found in the "History of the Loen Kingdom's Aristocracy!"

Her chanting of it had even attracted an existence suspected to be an evil spirit!

Even if it's an evil spirit… As long as you can help me… I'm willing to accept… Such a thought flashed through Fors's turbid mind.

She struggled to look over as she used all her strength to whisper, "The Fool that doesn't belong to this era…

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog…

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…

"Save me, save me…”

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CHAPTER 297
THE FULL MOON'S RAVINGS

Klein had just put on his double-breasted frock coat, picked up his half top hat, and was walking toward the door when he heard a series of illusory prayers.

Who is it? He frowned slightly and listened, but he could only confirm that the supplicant was a woman and that her voice was staccato, as though she were in great pain.

Since he had nothing particularly urgent to tend to, the newly-advanced Magician, Klein, casually tossed his half top hat onto the coat rack accurately, and he returned to his bedroom. After taking four steps counterclockwise, he entered the majestic palace.

This time, he didn't see any illusory star expanding or contracting with a deep red glow. Instead, at the end of the ancient, mottled bronze table, by the side of The Fool's seat was a clear radiance rippling out.

It's a prayer from a non-Tarot Club member… Is it Xio or that lady with curly brown hair? Klein speculated as he took his seat.

Since he had already emptied his anonymous account, he didn't suspect that someone was trying to steal his wealth.

Leaning back, Klein pointed with his left hand, spreading out his spirituality to touch the rippling light.

The scene around him suddenly changed. He saw the overturned coffee table, the slanted sofa, books and papers strewn all over the floor, and a

woman with brown hair struggling in pain.

At the same time, Klein heard her prayers.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era…

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog…

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck…

"Save me, save me…”

Save me? From the looks of it, she seems to be losing control. Her hair is growing longer at a discernible speed, and her skin is covered with a layer of sinister white light. How could I possibly save her… Klein observed carefully for a few seconds, then mumbled to himself, feeling stumped.

It was at this moment that he detected in the woman's anguished pleas a faint, illusory, indistinct raving.

Yes, a raving!

These ravings were similar to the ones he experienced before rising above the gray fog, but it had no madness or evil to it at all. Furthermore, it didn't contain any obvious malice.

It appears that this lady's state of nearly losing control is a result of hearing the ravings… If she stops hearing it, could she be able to calm down and turn for the better? In thought, Klein reached his hand out to the rippling circle of light.

Following that, he allowed his spirituality to gush out of his body, establishing a firm and mysterious connection

After advancing to Magician, his spirituality had become a lot more abundant, and the burden in this aspect had decreased accordingly.

…

Fors felt her head muddling as she felt her thoughts were like boiling water. They were constantly bubbling in a bid to break free of the restraints of her head.

"Am I dying… I don't want to, I don't want to become a monster…” Just as she was woefully thinking this in her mind, the pain flooded over her like a tidal wave.

Suddenly, she was wide awake. The pain, the irritation, the madness, and the despair, which she felt so deeply in her bones, seemed to no longer exist, as though it was only an illusion.

I managed to endure through it so quickly today? Isn't it longer during a Blood Moon? Confused, Fors opened her eyes which she had unconsciously closed. She found an endless grayish-white fog beneath her, and in front of her was an ancient, mottled bronze table.

Where is this place? Surprised, she looked around and saw numerous towering stone pillars, as well as a towering palace that was propped up by those stone pillars.

Then, at the very end of the long bronze table, she saw a mysterious figure shrouded in thick gray fog who seemed to be overlooking everything from above.

*What is this place? Who is he? *Fors turned wary and questioned inwardly.

Then, she remembered what she had just done!

Under her extreme pain, she had chanted the mysterious incantation which Xio had found in the "History of the Loen Kingdom's Aristocracy," an incantation that was suspected to be directed at some evil god!

No, not just evil spirits! He was actually able to temporarily help me get rid of the harmful effects of those terrifying ravings… He even pulled me into this strange world… This… While Fors suppressed the fear in her heart, she half stood up and bowed.

"May I know who you are…”

At that moment, she suddenly recalled the contents of the incantation as she blurted out, "You are The Fool! Uh, Mr. Fool.

"You are His Excellency, The Fool?"

Klein smiled, nodded slightly and said, "Just call me Mr. Fool."

As he spoke, he noticed on the back of the chair in which Fors was sitting on, the symbols and mysterious patterns formed by the shining stars were rapidly changing.

In just one or two seconds, the interior of the room was covered with layers upon layers of doors. Numerous illusory doors of the same kind were formed there!

Door? As soon as Klein saw the symbol, he immediately associated it with the mention of Mr. Door in Roselle's diary.

During a full moon, the other party would come close to the real world and let out cries for help!

Could the ravings have something to do with Mr. Door? Hmm… It's the night of the Blood Moon tonight, an enhanced version of the full moon… This lady corresponds to a door, and the symbol on the back of Miss Xio's seat is similar to the Sword of Judgment… Klein nodded indiscernibly.

Through this, he confirmed that once a stable connection was established and that if the other party was a Beyonder, the symbol behind the seat would change according to the other party's actual circumstances. They

didn't have to necessarily join the Tarot Club and come to the mysterious space above the gray fog at fixed intervals.

At that moment, waves of shock rose up in Fors's heart.

The Fool… It's indeed The Fool… That honorable name does point towards a powerful existence!

What does he want? Will he want to make a transaction with my soul?

Heh, at least—it's at least better than losing control from those ravings… I guess I managed to claw my life back. Whatever happens in the future would just be a bonus…

While she was still lost in her thoughts, she suddenly heard Mr. Fool ask with a smile, "You hear ravings from nowhere every full moon?"

How does he know? Fors looked over in surprise and replied in a daze, "Yes."

Before she finished her sentence, she suddenly thought of a possibility and asked, "D-do you know the origin of those ravings? Do you know who is trying to harm me? Do you know how to solve this problem once and for all?"

He's a miserable wretch who is lost in the darkness and trapped in a storm… Klein had intended to reply with the words that would shape his image, but when he thought about it, he couldn't be sure that the woman in front of him had indeed heard the words coming from Mr. Door.

In order to not make any mistakes and to not embarrass himself in the future, he skipped over the question and said with a vague smile, "He might not necessarily want to hurt you. Perhaps, he is just asking for your help."

Therefore, the ravings weren't malicious, not crazy or evil.

"Asking for my help? But those ravings push me closer and closer to losing control. If you hadn't helped me, I might've become a monster by now," Fors returned incredulously.

Klein grinned and said, "That's because you're too weak."

"I'm too weak?" Fors was stunned and at a loss.

Klein briefly explained, "The difference in your life's natural order and his is too great. Perhaps, just by breathing normally, the storm brought about by him can rip you to pieces. Perhaps, just a glance from him will cause you to die on the spot.

"Of course, if he purposely controls his own strength, it's not that he can't communicate normally with you. However, his voice might need to pass through layers of obstructions in order to reach your ears. Deliberate control typically implies a failure to call for help. Heh heh, that's if we assume that he's calling for help."

The difference in our life's natural order is too great… I would die from just one glance from him… Fors was stunned from what she heard. After quite some time, she forced a smile and said, "This reminds me of a saying.

"You may not look directly at God…"

Klein smiled at her without giving a positive answer.

Could it be that those terrifying ravings really come from an existence who's nearly a god? Mr. Fool can help me eliminate that person's influence, and all this time, he's been talking about it in a rather bland tone… Does this mean that he and that existence's life's natural order are at the same level? The more she thought about it, the more shocked she became. Even her body couldn't stop trembling.

Klein waited a few seconds, then asked, "How long does it last every full moon?"

"Three to five minutes. If it's the night of the Blood Moon, it will exceed seven minutes," Fors gathered her thoughts and answered honestly.

The more Klein listened, the more he felt that the ravings' owner belonged to Mr. Door.

He temporarily put the matter down and smiled.

"You can return in a few minutes.

"There is only one way to solve your problem, and that is to raise your life's natural order."

Fors hesitated for a moment before saying, "Whenever I encounter the full moon, can I recite your name?

"I-I will be your devout believer!"

"No, there's no need." Klein smiled and shook his head. "But I don't mind helping you along the way."

"Thank you so much!" Although she suspected that she was dealing with an evil god, she no longer wanted to experience the same painful "nightmare" as before.

After confirming this matter, she relaxed a lot. Noticing that there were still many seats around the long bronze table, she asked probingly, "Mr. Fool, it seems there are others who come here frequently?"

No, they might not necessarily be human… Fors added silently.

Klein smiled and said with a casual attitude, "They're a few people who are similar to you. I pulled them here for various reasons.

"They hope that I can hold a gathering at regular intervals to facilitate the trade of formulas, ingredients, information, and missions.

"I agreed to it."

Fors was enticed by what she heard. Thinking that she was already part of this, she boldly asked, "Mr. Fool, can I join this gathering?"

"Sure. Three in the afternoon on Mondays. Remove all disturbances." Klein smiled and pointed at the cards that suddenly appeared on the surface of the long bronze table. "They've decided to use the names of the tarot cards as their code names. You can pick one of these, but these already belong to someone and you cannot choose from…"

Fors nodded her head, shuffling the cards and cutting them with great interest while mumbling, "Let fate arrange my title…"

Soon, she pulled out a card and looked at it: "The Magician!"

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CHAPTER 298
TOGETHER AGAIN

Fors's eyelashes fluttered a few times before she slowly opened her eyes, only to find herself lying on the floor of her living room. Through the window, she saw that the bright moon was hanging high in the sky like a crimson disk. The normally thin and blurry chiffon seemed to turn into rich bloody light.

I'm not dead, I didn't lose control… It wasn't a dream just now… I really was saved by a mysterious and powerful Mr. Fool… When Fors sat up and examined herself, she saw that there was nothing unusual about the rest of her body except that her hair had grown longer and denser.

But my life is completely different from before… I don't know if this is good or bad… Silently mumbling to herself, Fors sat on the ground hugging her knees whilst lost in thought. Her mind would sometimes wander off, and at times, she would be anxious, sad, or confused.

…

Above the gray fog, Klein looked at the chair which had the symbol of a layered door on its back. He muttered to himself in thought, *I wonder what kind of information is contained in those ravings…*

When she's at Sequence 7 or Sequence 6, she should be able to resist the negative effects and hear the content of the ravings.

If she hasn't grasped the acting method, I can let Miss Justice and the others help me teach her. I have sworn under a Holy Artifact to the Goddess

that I wouldn't mention anything related to the acting method to people who aren't aware of it.

…When I advance to Sequence 5 and become a Nimblewright Master, perhaps I can use a corresponding ritual and the uniqueness of this mysterious space to remotely control her and directly see what she sees and hear what she hears.

That way, I can determine if it's Mr. Door…

This gentleman who has witnessed the history of the Fourth Epoch might be even older than Mr. Azik who had lived multiple lives.

I wonder what Sequence his strength and level are equivalent to. 2? Or even 1?

After some consideration, he felt that his spirituality was becoming unstable, so he hurriedly descended into the gray fog and returned to the real world.

This was a common occurrence after a recent advancement; therefore, Klein gave up on going out, and he patiently entered Cogitation at home, retracting and releasing his spirituality.

…

In the wee hours of the morning, Fors took the earliest steam metro back to St. George Borough before taking a public carriage to the two-bedroom apartment where she lived with Xio.

When she opened the door, she was surprised to find Xio, who usually slept late, toasting some bread.

"The sudden appearance of last night's Blood Moon gave me insomnia, so I woke up very early. Fors, are you alright? Did those strange ravings get stronger?" Xio asked, looking up with concern.

Fors's vision suddenly blurred. She turned her head to the side, forced a smile, and said with her usual confrontational tone, "What happened to your brain? Didn't I say it before? The ravings will definitely become stronger during the Blood Moon!

"But it doesn't affect me at all. Yeah, it doesn't affect me at all. Look at me, look at how energetic I am right now!

"Hey, toast a piece of bread for me too!"

"I thought you didn't like eating it this way?" Xio tidied her short, blonde hair and mumbled softly.

…

After taking his first step at revenge and attaining an advancement, Klein slept through the night. He leisurely went out to buy Feynapotter noodles for breakfast, along with a Desi pie and a cup of sweet iced tea.

After enjoying the delicacies in satisfaction, he put down his fork and knife and picked up the newspaper. He was in a very relaxed mood as he began to read.

A quick scan revealed that the headlines of the Tussock Times read:

"Night of the Bloody Moon, the Killer Demon strikes again!"

Again? Klein quickly flipped through the front pages of the other newspapers and saw many similar titles:

"The 11th true case! The police are helpless!"

"The cold-blooded Killing Demon has once again made a clear mockery of the police!"

"The atmosphere of panic is spreading through Backlund!"

This… The Nighthawks and the Mandated Punishers must all be having headaches, right? Klein sighed in his heart.

To be honest, he had the urge to catch the killer.

Back on Earth, when he was weak, he would often daydream about being a person to uphold justice and punish evil. But now, as a Sequence 7 Beyonder, Klein felt sorry for his past dreams due to his choice of not being a superhero.

*Sigh, what a pity. This case has already received a high level of attention. If I were to join in, wouldn't that mean that I'm waiting for my identity to be exposed? I still have to be rational… Furthermore, according to The Sun, the culprit is highly likely to be advancing from Sequence 6 to Sequence 5. Although I won't be afraid of him, I might not be able to catch him even with the new spells and spell-like abilities I gained. It's quite risky… *After thinking about it, Klein still chose to follow his deepest beliefs and remain an ordinary citizen.

He believed that with the strength of the few Churches—if the killer were to continue committing crimes—there was a high chance of them getting caught!

After flipping through the news, Klein glanced at the Backlund Morning Post and found that the advertisement for the Ernst Firm's purchase of goods had appeared again on the fifth page.

There's going to be a gathering tomorrow night at 8 o'clock. I can sell the Spring of the Elves marrow crystals to the Apothecary then… Klein muttered as he memorized the first four digits of the price listed.

Half an hour later, he finished reading the thick newspaper in front of him and started to seriously consider his future plans.

The long-term plan is to advance to a higher Sequence, becoming a demigod expert before I plot my revenge against Ince Zangwill.

A mid-term plan is to find the acting method for Magician. I'll slowly summarize the corresponding mantras to observe, so as to digest the potion bit by bit. During this process, I'll start my search for the Characteristic of a Human-skinned Shadow, hair from a Deep-sea Naga, Thousand-faced Hunter's blood, and mutated pituitary gland, as well as the means to remove an evil god's corruption from an object.

Um… The Beyonder ingredients of Sequence 6 each cost around 1500 pounds. It's very expensive!

*In addition, I need to obtain a mystical item that's focused on attacking or controlling. Although a Magician is very powerful, most of the Beyonder powers are used for life-preservation and escaping. In a corresponding environment, the strongest attack is that of a custom revolver. The only boon is how it takes others by surprise, and it also lacks the means to control an enemy. *

Short-term plan, short-term plan… Heh, I'll be cutting up some paper figurines and make preparations for my powers. I'll visit the circus in the afternoon as a way to relax and for entertainment. I can try to gain inspiration for the "acting" by observing ordinary magicians. Yes, I saw in the newspapers that there are a few permanent circuses in Backlund…

After finalizing his thoughts, Klein immediately tidied up his plates, cleaned his knife and fork, and devoted himself into being busy making preparations.

When it was almost noon, he put down the scissors and looked at the three crude paper figurines in front of him. He sighed and muttered to himself, *This is probably the first time in my life that I've done manual work so seriously*

Fortunately, it's just to cut out some paper figurines and not flowers or embroidery. It's fine as long as it's shaped like a person!

Sigh, if it wasn't for the fact that my hands have become dexterous, I might've failed today…

Klein had just used an additional paper figurine to test his capabilities and confirmed that everything was fine.

He folded the paper figurines and hid it in a stack of notes. Klein put them away into his pocket.

Just as he was about to go out and enjoy a meal at a slightly better restaurant before heading to the nearest circus to watch the performance, the doorbell suddenly rang, and the pleasant, jingling sound echoed in the air.

A job? The advertisement I posted should be almost done with its listing period… Wearing a starched shirt and a thin warm sweater, Klein came to the door and grabbed the handle.

At the same time, the image of the visitor appeared in his mind.

It was a man in his forties. He was rather fat, and he appeared to have difficulty even standing.

His eyes were tiny from the copious amounts of flesh on his face. His skin was rough but very white. He had a gentleman's cane in his hand, and a very tall and large hat on his head.

Even though Backlund was cold in October, the man's forehead was dripping with sweat.

Beside him were two attendants in bright red coats, supporting him from both sides.

I don't know him… Klein mumbled, and before his spiritual perception could respond, he opened the door.

"Good afternoon. The weather is truly scorching hot." The fat middle-aged man took out a handkerchief and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

As he spoke, a cold wind blew, causing the two attendants beside him to shiver.

"Good afternoon. Is there anything I can help you with?" Klein asked politely.

"You are Detective Sherlock Moriarty? I have something that I want to entrust you with." The middle-aged man forced a smile and said, "I forgot to introduce myself. I'm Rogo Colloman, a jewelry businessman."

"Please, come on in." Klein smiled and made way.

Rogo Colloman stepped in with heavy footsteps and sat down on the sofa, causing the old furniture to emit a resistant groan.

"What is it exactly?" Klein took out a copper penny and deftly rolled it around his fingertips.

Rogo sighed and said, "I wish for you to protect my son until tomorrow afternoon. He has offended some lunatics."

"Until tomorrow afternoon? Have you found a solution? Why not call the police?" Klein asked unhurriedly.

Rogo remained silent for two seconds before saying, "Adol got into some bad company and was led to do bad things by them. Oh, it's nothing too serious, but ones that can land him in prison. Unless it's necessary, I don't want to call the police.

"He recently had a falling out with those bad friends of his. As a result, he suddenly broke down and kept yelling that those people wanted to kill him.

"I was very worried, so I hired six senior bodyguards from a security company to keep watch outside. Then, I hired another four private detectives to take shifts watching over Adol, even if he's sleeping.

"But one of the detectives suddenly had an accident at home and will only be able to return tomorrow afternoon. Therefore, I can only hire another detective at the last minute.

"I'm sorry, I can only hire you for one day.

"Yes… The reward is 10 pounds, and if you were to encounter danger, I'd add more. You'll definitely be satisfied."

Is that so… 10 pounds for a day. That's equivalent to a week's salary of Mr. Sammer from next door… Klein was able to tell from the color of the other's emotions that he wasn't lying.

During the brief silence in the living room, he kept flipping the copper penny between his fingers and with a thud, it fell into his palm.

Klein glanced at it, bent his fingers and smiled.

"Deal."

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CHAPTER 299
SNAPPING FINGERS

West Borough, Grimm Garden Street

Klein, with a quite a stubble around his mouth, wore a pair of gold-rimmed glasses while carrying a top hat and a black cane. He followed Rogo Colloman into a spacious and bright living room.

There was a huge crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling. The walls, corners, and tables were decorated with all kinds of golden carvings and ornaments. The entire area looked gorgeous, exquisite, and luxurious.

As expected of a jewelry businessman, a businessman staying in West Borough… Klein scanned the oil paintings by the side and sighed.

With every step Rogo took, the fat on his body quivered. It left people maliciously wondering when his clothes and pants would snap.

However, as a jewelry businessman, he had enough money to buy clothes of the best quality.

"Detective Moriarty, this is my son, Adol." Logo stopped at the edge of a carpet and pointed to a boy that was 15 or 16 years old and was sitting on a single sofa.

As all the fireplaces in the house were lit, and there were metallic pipes to conduct the heat around, the living room was rather warm. It even made Klein feel like taking off his clothes until he only had a shirt and a pair of trousers left. However, the boy was wrapped in a thick fur coat and had a blanket that looked burning hot on his legs.

At that moment, he had his head low, tightly hugging himself as he shivered nonstop. His dark blue hair seemed to have lost its luster.

Rogo looked at him with concern and raised his voice slightly, "Adol, this is Detective Moriarty. He will be protecting you for today and tomorrow."

At these words, Adol raised his head, revealing his pale face, his bluish lips, and his unfocused eyes.

"Protect me, protect me… They're going to kill me! They want to kill me!" His voice became sharper and sharper. In the end, he covered his ears with his hands and screamed.

After a few seconds, he gradually calmed down.

During this process, Klein had already tapped his molars and secretly activated his Spirit Vision.

Huh... He held back the shock that had crept up to his mouth and carefully examined him again.

He saw that the color of Adol's aura had been dyed with a deep blackish-green sheen!

This is a sign of being haunted by wraiths, a sign of possible possession!

Adol's bad friends are already taking revenge on him… Or perhaps, there were no such things as "bad company" at all... Klein quietly reached out, held Mr. Azik's copper whistle, and allowed his spirituality to spread. Then, he thoughtfully looked away from Adol and looked at the others inside the living room.

By the oriel window stood a man in a black coat. He was tall and sturdy, not smiling, and his waist was bulging as if he were hiding a gun.

This should be one of the six bodyguards… Klein was about to size up another person when Rogo Colloman introduced, "Detective Kaslana; her assistant, Lydia.

"Detective Stuart."

At this point, Rogo turned around and pointed at Klein.

"This is Detective Sherlock Moriarty."

Kaslana was in her thirties, had black hair and blue eyes, and thick eyebrows. She was probably a beauty when she was young, but now, because of the sagging muscles on her cheeks, she didn't seem very amiable.

Lydia, her assistant, was a red-haired lady of about twenty years of age. Her figure was excellent, but she had an average appearance.

Both women wore something similar to what aristocratic riders wore. The white shirts they wore were tight at the waist which matched the more tight-fitting trousers that facilitated movement. The pleats were the only thing that distinguished their clothes from men.

In addition, they provided no concealment for the two revolvers around their waists.

This reminded Klein of a saying from Lawyer Jurgen that illegal possession of a gun was a sure thing for a private investigator. This was because—unless one was a noble, a Member of Parliament, or a senior civil servant—it was very difficult to obtain an all-purpose weapon permit.

Stuart sat opposite to Kaslana and Lydia. He had a lean face, but he grew a bushy beard. His light green eyes were unusually lively.

He was about the same age as Lydia, and almost as tall as Klein, a little over 1.7m and weighing 140lb.

Stuart had an armpit holster, and in it, there was obviously a specially designed revolver.

After exchanging pleasantries, Klein took off his coat, took off his hat, and handed it to the maidservant next to him.

"Put it somewhere I can retrieve it quickly from. There are some important items inside."

In fact, he had already transferred the paper figurines, notes, charms, a matchbox, etc to his trouser pockets. The only thing left in his coat was herbal powder, extract essence, keys, and his wallet. There were a total of 206 pounds in paper bills in his wallet.

Stuart, who was sitting there, turned his head to size Klein up and chuckled. "You didn't bring a gun?"

"Gun? This is my gun." Klein smiled and raised his cane.

At the same time, he puffed out his cheeks to stimulate a sound.

Bang!

The sound of a gunshot rang out, and without thinking, Stuart rolled over, while Kaslana and Lydia quickly got off the sofa, each finding a place to hide.

Rogo and the servant beside him were both surprised and confused about what was happening. Adol continued keeping his head low as he shivered.

When they saw that Klein was only holding onto a black cane and realized that nothing had happened, Kaslana and company calmed down. They frowned and asked, "What just happened?"

"Ever since I handed a revolver I picked up to the police, I've been learning how to imitate its sound. It seems to be quite effective," Klein replied half-

jokingly.

"That's not funny, Detective Moriarty," Kaslana said in a deep voice.

I just wanted to perform some magic for you… Klein lampooned. He handed his cane to the maidservant and solemnly nodded.

"I will keep that in mind."

Stuart, who was in the most pathetic state a moment ago, didn't seem to be angry at all. He patted his clothes with great interest, got up and asked, "Why haven't I heard of you, Mr. Moriarty? I mean, I know a lot of people in the detective business, but I've not heard about you in the past."

"I only came to Backlund in early September," Klein briefly explained.

"Is that so…” Stuart laughed and said, "Tonight, the two of us will pair up. We'll be in charge of everything from midnight until tomorrow morning. Will that be a problem?"

"Nope," Klein responded with the same smile.

"Okay, after dinner, you guys have some rest and take over your shifts in the early morning," Kaslana added.

Klein took a long look at the trembling Adol and nodded seriously.

…

Nothing happened throughout the afternoon, and the worried male and female hosts prepared a hearty dinner for the detectives and the bodyguards, but no alcoholic beverages were provided.

After eating and drinking to his heart's content, Klein and Stuart, a young man with a full beard, went to their rooms on the second floor.

Seeing that no one was around, Stuart shook his head and said, "Sherlock, you should've noticed that the problem with Adol isn't something regarding revenge."

Bro, you sure are affable… Klein's expression didn't change as he asked, "Why do you say that?"

"He looks more like he has a mental problem, or, according to the countryside, he's been haunted by ghosts and evil spirits. Frankly, I'm afraid of that." Stuart sighed. "Mr. Colloman should take him to a psychiatrist, and if that doesn't work, get the priests from the Lord of Storms to sprinkle some holy water and perform a ritual."

"You can suggest it to him," Klein said objectively.

"If Adol doesn't get better, I'll consider it in about a couple of days." Stuart glanced sideways at Klein.

Klein laughed and replied, "That's up to you. My mission will be over tomorrow."

At that moment, the two of them had arrived at their destination and entered their respective rooms.

…

One in the morning, inside Adol's bedroom.

Klein sat in a rocking chair, holding onto Azik's copper whistle, quietly watching his ward. Stuart sipped his coffee at his desk.

The two of them didn't speak, afraid that they would wake the sleeping Adol.

As time passed, a cold chill swept through the room.

Adol sat up and opened his eyes.

"What's wrong?" Stuart asked somewhat nervously.

"To… the washroom…” Adol replied in a soft, dreamy voice.

His face seemed paler, and his lips were turning purple.

Stuart was about to speak when he saw Sherlock Moriarty stand up and nod at him.

"I'll follow him."

"Alright." Stuart let out a sigh of relief.

Putting his hands into his pockets, Klein stayed one step behind Adol and followed him to the entrance of the washroom two rooms away.

Just as Adol was about to close the door behind him, he saw a figure flash in.

"I can't let you out of my sight. Heh, do whatever you have to do, and pretend that I don't exist." Klein smiled and leaned against the wall.

Adol remained silent, his eyes unfocused as he looked into the mirror.

He turned on the faucet and let the water flow.

At this moment, Klein took out a box of matches and lit a matchstick, as though he wanted to smoke.

However, he didn't do so. He blew on the air and allowed the match to go out.

Pa!

Klein casually threw the match in front of him and took out another item.

Adol, whose back was facing him, suddenly straightened up. The figure in the mirror was so pale that it looked like a corpse.

Whoosh! In the washroom, a cold wind howled. While keeping his lower body fixed, Adol turned around and glared at Klein's left hand, at the delicate copper whistle that was being tossed up and down.

Whoosh!

A gust of cold wind blew across Klein's face.

He continued smiling and snapped his fingers.

With a loud bang, a flame rose from the ground, igniting an invisible figure.

The figure struggled for a few moments before completely dispersing. The flames extinguished as a result.

Klein put away Azik's copper whistle and looked calmly at Adol, whose eyes were beginning to focus.

Adol appeared to have finally awoken from a long nightmare.

He saw a young man standing a few steps away. The man was wearing a white shirt, dark trousers, and a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. He was leaning against the wall with a smile on his face.

Then, he heard a gentle voice.

"What happened to you?"

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CHAPTER 300
SPIRIT DANCE

"What exactly happened?" Adol muttered this question softly and realized that he couldn't remember what he had done the past few days.

He looked around dreamily, frightened, panicked, and confused.

"Who are you?

"Where is this place?"

"This is your washroom. Don't you recognize it? I'm a private detective in charge of protecting you." Klein looked at the teenage boy who hadn't figured out the situation around him and chuckled in response.

"My house… Detective to protect me… What exactly happened…" Adol looked around in astonishment and murmured to himself.

Suddenly, he stopped; his already pale face filled with unconcealable fear.

"M-maybe there really are ghosts in this world! There really are ghosts!"

His voice was shaky, but Klein could hear two completely different feelings from his voice—fear and excitement—and these were perfectly depicted by the color of his emotions.

Excited? Did this boy end up provoking a wraith because of his thirst for excitement? It's true that the young are bold and unafraid of death… Klein made a preliminary guess, but he asked in confusion, "Ghosts?"

After becoming a Magician, his Spirit Vision had been slightly enhanced, but not by much. He was still unable to see the Astral Projection surface deep in the Ether Body and, as such, unable to judge whether the target was a Beyonder or not.

Adol's pale face suddenly flushed red.

"Yes, ghosts!"

He flailed his arms and added, "There exists a wider world beyond our senses! I'm serious! Death is not the end of everything!"

*This line… He's indeed an adolescent… However, I think I've seen similar words somewhere… *Klein smiled and said, "I believe in another saying—in the face of time that is even more ancient than ancientness, even death itself will disappear."

Without waiting for Adol to say anything, he took out his gold pocket watch, opened it and said, "So, how did you get yourself into the state you were in before? You were like a patient with a nervous breakdown."

"I…” Adol turned his head and thought for a few seconds, then he said, "I joined a society; it's not an ordinary society! We all believe that death is not the end. We can use mysticism to even sense death directly and understand that everything can be reversed. Yes, we believe that the dead can be resurrected!"

Klein, who had just climbed out of his grave more than a month ago chuckled dryly.

"You and the others were trying to revive the dead?"

*Death is not the end… A world beyond the senses… Everything can be reversed. Mystic sensing… Aren't these the teachings of the Numinous Episcopate? These were all created to revive Death… *He muttered to himself silently in enlightenment.

"Yes!" Adol nodded, his eyes bright, but completely unable to hide his fear.

"Where did you get your corpses?" Klein pressed.

"W-we will secretly dig up graves, those that haven't been buried for long, or buy them from the hospital…" Adol said as he recalled.

It's indeed a crime that can get you thrown into jail… It's no wonder that Rogo Colloman doesn't want the police involved… You sure are bold to get your thrills… Klein maintained his genial smile and asked, "And did you succeed?"

"Not yet… The way they looked at me during the last gathering was l-like they were looking at a corpse—as if they were wondering where to place their corresponding mystics… And then we danced a Spirit Dance and communicated with the world beyond with our senses, and t-then, I lost all my memories since then…" Adol's body began to tremble uncontrollably.

Spirit Dance? It really is the Numinous Episcopate… This fellow became a test subject for his companions? Klein frowned and asked, "Your memory is disconnected from that point until now?"

According to the internal records of the Nighthawks, "Spirit Dances" originated from the ancient sacrificial dances that were popular in the Southern Continent. It was the ritual method that Death loved.

A "Spirit Dance" was to use the beat, rhythm, and movements to harmonize one's spirituality so that it could interact with the natural environment so as to establish an interaction with the target of the prayer. Then, combined with a simple altar arrangement and corresponding honorific name, it can achieve the effects of a more complex ritualistic magic.

"Yes," Adol softly replied before he suddenly raised his head. "What day is it today? What time is it now?"

"Friday morning, 1:12 am," Klein answered based on his memory.

Adol subconsciously took a deep breath and said, "I've missed the newest gathering…

"They conduct a resurrection ritual outside Grimm Cemetery every Friday at three in the morning."

Grimm Cemetery got its name because it wasn't far from Grimm Garden Street.

"You still wish to go? Have you forgotten what had happened to you? Oh, you don't actually remember, but you should ask your father, your mother, and servants," Klein reminded the young man in front of him.

And I might not be able to help you any further… He added silently in his heart.

After this incident, he discovered another weakness of a Magician, which was the lack of an ability to deal with wraiths and shadow-related creatures. Only the control of fire barely counted. But after those creatures possessed a human body, exorcism and purification became a problem, unless he wanted to kill both the ghost and the human.

Of course, Klein wasn't completely helpless in this aspect. He could conduct ritualistic magic to do similar things, but that would be very troublesome. It would easily expose his identity and was unsuited for actual combat.

After some thought, he had finally chosen to use Azik's copper whistle to lure the wraith out. Then, he controlled the flames to complete the purification.

However, the level of damage wasn't high. If he were to encounter a slightly more powerful wraith, it was possible that he was unable to take care of it.

*I still lack items or charms that deal with undead creatures. If only I had the Sealed Artifact 3-0782, Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem… *Klein's thoughts were momentarily distracted.

Adol suddenly remembered his missing memories, and his face turned pale again. He answered with a trembling voice, "No, I don't want to go! I never want to go again!"

"Very good." Klein smiled in support.

Adol looked at his face which didn't contain the slightest bit of fear, and subconsciously asked, "Aren't you afraid after I've said so much?"

Klein stopped leaning against the wall and slowly straightened his body. He replied in a relaxed tone, "For a detective, they would rather not believe something unless there's concrete evidence."

He opened the door and walked out, wondering if he should make contact with the Numinous Episcopate. After all, this might involve the mystery of Mr. Azik's life.

Adol looked at the private detective's back in a daze. It took him quite some time to realize that there was no one in the washroom other than himself. Furthermore, the moonlight outside was so gloomy that it left long shadows, making it seem as though something invisible was lurking and watching.

He shivered and hurriedly shouted, "Wait for me!"

As he spoke, Adol quickened his pace, rushed out of the washroom, and followed closely behind Klein.

*He knows fear and is apprehensive. That means he's still redeemable… *Klein mumbled before inserting his hands into his pockets.

When he returned to his bedroom, Stuart didn't notice that Adol had already turned for the better. He still wore a serious expression from the ghost story he imagined himself, so he didn't dare to walk around recklessly.

After Adol fell asleep again, Klein took out a copper penny and let it move between his fingers.

When it was close to 2:50 am, he threw up the coin and caught it firmly before standing up and whispered to Stuart, "I'll be heading to the balcony to smoke a cigarette."

"Be quick," Stuart urged with somewhat taut nerves.

Klein put on his long gown and walked slowly out the door to the balcony at the end of the corridor. Then, he hid in the shadows.

Then, he pulled out a rather crudely cut paper figurine.

Pa!

Klein violently shook his wrist, causing the paper to make a crisp sound. The paper quickly expanded and turned into a human.

The person was about the same height as Klein, a wax statue intrinsically carved with the same exact facial features.

This was one of the uses of Paper Figurine Substitutes.

Soon, Klein focused his mind, clenched his right fist, and lightly tapped his body.

Without a sound, the figurine seemed to come alive. It even had a cigarette with a glowing red head in its mouth as the fragrance of tobacco wafted out.

"By delegating this figurine, this illusion can last half an hour… I'm really a magician!" Klein put on his gloves, reached out, and pushed himself over before sliding down the balcony stealthily, avoiding the patrolling security.

…

Outside Grimm Cemetery, in a secluded forest.

Klein stood among the treetops as he looked at the relatively open and flat area not too far away.

Around him were evergreen leaves and brown branches, but their surfaces were stained with gray dust.

From what Klein could see, there were about eight young men and women wearing long black robes dancing and twitching around a corpse.

The dance was full of rhythm, as though it had some sort of mysterious flavor to it.

The girl shook her long hair and the boy extended his hand while kneeling. This scene had a subtle connection to their surroundings. It was the rhythm of nature.

After they danced for three to four minutes, everything within a ten-meter radius was affected by a wild and confusing atmosphere. The atmosphere gradually turned sinister, and there was a hint of divinity mixed in it.

It really is a "Spirit Dance"…Ritualistic magic that even normal people can participate in… Klein cast his gaze away and looked at the man in black robes who was chanting an incantation beside the corpse.

Earlier, he was the one who was instructing those young boys and girls on how to perform the "Spirit Dance."

He should be a member of the Numinous Episcopate, with a high probability of being a Beyonder… Klein nodded indiscernibly, intending to watch the resurrection ritual.

At this point, the dance reached its climax. The adult man in black lifted his head and took off his wig, revealing the strange tattoos engraved on his bald head.

He raised his hands and shouted, "Death!

"Honorable Death!

"Is about to return!"

After he finished shouting, the dancing stopped. The seven to eight youths stood on either side. They appeared to be in a daze, filled with anticipation, excitement, and fear.

Next, the man bent down and opened the iron cage at his feet, taking out a black object.

Klein looked over and saw that it was a blue-eyed black cat.

Th-this works too? He was obviously stunned for a moment. Suddenly, he thought of the various folklore related to a black cat. For example, if a black cat which symbolized the evil emissary of hell jumped over a corpse, the corpse would be awakened.

This was the first time Klein was seeing someone use a similar method in a ritual.

The man stepped forward while restraining the black cat from struggling before throwing it at the corpse.

Meow!

All the black cat's hairs stood on end as it hissed and leaped over the corpse.

At that moment, Klein felt like he could understand cat language. He believed that the cat must have said one word, "Fuck!"

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